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The New Criterion

December 1988

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A nostalgia for innocence: Martin Green's "New York 1913"

by Hilton Kramer

The impulse to look back upon halcyon days—to seize upon a treasured moment in history when every promise of an ardently desired change in all aspects of life seemed not only infinitely fulfillable but virtually irresistible—is one that we are all prone to in periods of disillusionment and disarray. But some sensibilities are more susceptible than others to this tendency to locate in a distant past the moment of optimum possibility, and it is my impression, anyway, that nowadays it is our aging radicals who find this impulse both especially tempting and especially necessary. For it is in the nature of the radical dream to be defeated by the realities of life, and the longer radicals live with that dream the more reason they have to regret its atrocious consequences. Yet the dream itself cannot be abandoned by the faithful, for it is, in essence, a dream of salvation—and so refuge must be taken in some Eden of history where motives are seen to be pure and actions are seen to remain innocent of evil consequence. Which is one of the reasons, I suppose, why the Left has lately been so immensely productive in giving us histories and biographies that celebrate the origins of radical causes and apotheosize the heroes and heroines that remain its sainted figures.

I was reminded of this phenomenon yet again when I read in Alfred Kazin's review of Dorothy Gallagher's new biography of Carlo Tresca—it appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* of October 2—still another invocation to what Mr. Kazin called "an ancient radicalism—intransigent, far-out, relatively 'pure'—that still evokes the most stirring associations with early 20th-century labor, with a time of great cultural renewal in American thought and with a great company of freely thinking, freely moving, freely loving men and women whose descendants are probably now embarrassed by them." Mr. Kazin was certainly right about the "stirring associations" which this "ancient radicalism"—by which he means, I gather, pre-Gulag radicalism—continues to evoke in the hearts and minds of the political Left. But he was wrong about the embarrassment he attributed to the descendants of the "ancient" radicals. Far from suffering any embarrassment over all those "freely thinking, freely moving, freely loving men and women" who served the cause of that "ancient radicalism," their descendants are now actively and passionately engaged in the task of beatifying them. What these descendants of the "ancient" radicals really feel about them is a combination of envy and nostalgia. They envy the political illusions that later historical horrors—horrors so often committed in the name of the very radicalism they espouse—have effectively denied to all but the commissars and knaves among them; and they feel a deep, intractable nostalgia for the kind of innocence that once made it possible to

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believe in the radical ideal without any concern for or even awareness of the immense human catastrophes that, as we now know, inevitably follow in its wake.

It is this combination of envy and nostalgia, moreover, that has made so many of the historical and biographical studies of this "ancient radicalism" so egregiously sentimental. For a certain sentimentality is absolutely essential to this literature, which seeks to exalt illusion and innocence at the expense of reality and knowledge. In a literature designed to succor the faithful as well as win new converts to its ranks, sentimentality isn't so much an option as it is a structural necessity. It is, in any case, the affective medium from which this literature draws its energy and spirit.

Even so, few studies of this "ancient radicalism" have been as open in their expression of envy or as unabashed in their embrace of nostalgia as the book that Martin Green has now given us in *New York 1913*.[1] Ostensibly a book about art and politics—the two principal events it focuses on are the Armory Show that introduced the American public to modernist art and the Paterson Strike Pageant that turned an historic labor dispute into a symbol of cultural emancipation—*New York 1913* is in reality a kind of historical tableau designed to celebrate what Mr. Green calls the "spirituality or transcendence" that, in his view, characterized not only the two events under study here but the larger aspiration which he believes they were created to serve. Tableaux of this sort are not, perhaps, the finest instruments for dealing with the materials of history, for they turn everything they touch into a species of metaphor, allegory, and romance. For this reason Mr. Green's claim to be writing "a richer and more material history" in *New York 1913* is not one that is supported in the book he has actually given us. But both the claim and the book itself have much to tell us about what happens to the writing of history when it is made the vehicle of a nostalgia for innocence.

My guess is that the principal inspiration for this book, if not indeed its model, was the movie *Reds*, which combined fantasy and history in a similar fashion and which was Hollywood's contribution to the same kind of retrospective yearning. It certainly shares with *Reds* the dual function of idealizing an earlier period of radical inspiration while at the same time according to more recent radical developments—those of the Sixties and its aftermath—an honorific lineage. We are again reminded that almost every account of the radical past that nowadays comes out of the Left is, in one way or another, a defense of the Sixties. One can say for Mr. Green, at least, that he makes no attempt to disguise this aspect of his project. Toward the end of the book he sadly announces that "not perhaps until the late 1960s was there any equivalent" of the spirit he has discerned in the New York of 1913, and it is in order to offer us a more innocent and more picturesque version of the Sixties that he has apparently written this book.

As was the case in *Reds*, Mr. Green's historical tableau features many familiar figures, of course—personalities as diverse as Marcel Duchamp and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Gertrude Stein and Big Bill Haywood, John Sloan and Theodore Roosevelt and Mabel Dodge—and about none of them, it must be said, does the author have anything new to tell us. This isn't his purpose, to be sure. In creating this tableau Mr. Green isn't as interested in breaking new ground as he is in staging his own pageant, complete with banners and bunting and two-dimensional effigies, upon an historical scaffold that is already very well-known.

To lend a plausible air of coherence and novelty and uplift to this pageant, Mr. Green has erected as his standard a banner bearing the words, "the spirit of 1913," thereby reassuring his readers that what

1 *New York 1913: The Armory Show and the Paterson Strike Pageant*, by Martin Green; Charles Scribner's Sons, 320 pages, $24.95.

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they are being offered on this occasion is an account of a bright new dawn—what he describes as "the atmosphere of hope and confidence which so many people in New York in 1913 had been creating for each other." By drawing the line at 1913, Mr. Green is very deliberately and knowingly isolating this bright dawn from the very dark days that followed it. He readily acknowledges that with the coming of the First World War, "the damage done to what I have called the spirit of 1913 was fatal." He is even willing to recognize that "the post-1917 history of Bolshevik rule in Russia is one of the bitterest human legends for those who believed in revolution as a spiritual project," though—oddly enough—the historical reality of the 1917 Revolution does nothing to diminish his admiration for what he calls the "bursts of energy, and many acts of heroism, individual and group," which for him define the very ethos of the revolutionary spirit (as they often do for those who are not its victims). What Mr. Green especially cherishes in both art and revolution are the "brilliant feats which drew others to invest their own energies in comparable work," and it is these "brilliant feats" that we are invited to lavish our nostalgia upon in this pageant of the "spirit of 1913." Never mind that, in politics at least, it all turned out so badly. As a "spiritual project," even the most dubious and deplorable aspects of this alleged "spirit of 1913" offered its privileged participants the requisite portion of existential gratification, and that is what really counts for Martin Green. That is also what makes this book about 1913 so recognizably a valentine to the late 1960s.

About the chronicle of the Armory Show that is given us in *New York 1913*, it need only be observed that it is so fragmentary and tendentious—so scripted, as we might say, to conform to Mr. Green's own "spiritual project"—that it is all but worthless to any reader looking for a reliable account of this historic event. Mr. Green does not appear to know very much about art. He knows only what he has read about it, and what he has mainly read in this case is Milton W. Brown's *The Story of the Armory Show* (1963), which is an excellent book in many ways but not one in urgent need of a tendentious abridgement twenty-five years after publication. About the emergence of the modern movement in America, Mr. Green is simply naïve and uninformed. His notion that modernism was something that "an elite American class in touch with Europe" had "imposed . . . on American art" sounds a lot like the kind of thing that Thomas Craven and Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton used to say in the 1930s and that Tom Wolfe has been saying again for some years now, but sheer repetition doesn't make the claim any less false.

The truth is that the Armory Show "imposed" nothing; but it revealed much, and it was on the basis of its revelations that certain isolated—and for the most part powerless—figures, both artists and others, began their long uphill labor to acquire for modernist art the kind of attention it deserved.

It is, moreover, the sheerest nonsense to claim that Picasso and Matisse conducted "a guerrilla war against the bourgeois class and its hegemony" or that "they denied reality via their denial of realism." This is nothing but the old—and long discredited—bourgeois philistinism reorchestrated to serve the purposes of a radical "spiritual project." About the art in question it is extremely obtuse, and about the whole art-historical epoch it purports to explain it is woefully ignorant. When we find Mr. Green writing of what he calls Cézanne's "famous pictures of apples" that "he [Cézanne] offered his viewers the ontology or archetypal essence of, for instance, pieces of fruit," we can see straightaway that he is out of his depth. It is shocking that an academic of Mr. Green's standing should prove to be so inept in dealing with the commonplaces of art-historical discourse.

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He is no better, in my opinion, when it comes to dealing with the history of labor, yet on this subject—at least as it pertains to the Paterson Strike of 1913—Mr. Green's failure is less one of historical perception than it is of moral intelligence. He knows very well that for the silk workers who actually went out on strike in Paterson, New Jersey, and for whose benefit the Paterson Strike Pageant was allegedly organized, the Pageant was a costly fiasco. He duly reports that the strike itself "came to an inglorious end," and even provides something of an epitaph:

> By July 29 most employees were back at work; twenty-five hundred went elsewhere, two thousand more were blacklisted by Paterson employers. The wages lost in the strike were estimated at $5,500,000, and the owners were supposed to have lost an equivalent amount. Landlords lost two to five months rent, and special police cost the town ten thousand dollars. There were fifteen hundred arrests and five deaths. Paterson was never again a prosperous textile center.

Yet in the face of this debacle Mr. Green writes about the Paterson Strike Pageant as the kind of "spiritual project" he believes we have reason to admire and emulate even now. Which prompts one to observe that it is not only about art that the author of *New York 1913* is so egregiously obtuse.

What, then, *was* the Paterson Strike Pageant? It was a theatrical event, preceded by a parade, staged in the old Madison Square Garden ostensibly for the benefit of the striking workers in the Paterson textile industry. John Reed was its principal impresario and script-writer, Big Bill Haywood its principal mentor, and the writers, artists, publicists, and hangers-on who frequented Mabel Dodge's Greenwich Village salon its principal cheerleaders and fund-raisers. For everyone but the workers it was an immense success. Certainly for Reed and many others in Mabel Dodge's circle it was a heady triumph. One writer even called the Pageant "a new cultural form," and Mr. Green appears to agree with this. Haywood was also said to feel, as Mr. Green writes, "that the Pageant was the greatest personal triumph of his career." Note the word "personal," for in fact the Pageant marked the beginning of the end of the I.W.W.—the radical workers movement that Haywood headed and that was never again a force in the American labor movement. The I.W.W. was indeed a major factor in providing the Pageant with its particular ethos, but the real task of organizing labor quickly passed into the hands of more responsible and less romantic parties.

As soon as the Pageant was over, John Reed and Mabel Dodge took off for Europe for the purpose of consummating their love affair. "This sudden disappearance," Mr. Green writes in what is my favorite sentence in this book, "must have reinforced suspicions among the strikers of some inauthenticity in the commitment of their Village friends." The strike was lost, the I.W.W. was all but dead, the striking workers were abandoned, but John Reed and Mabel Dodge had been provided with a suitably exciting prelude to the romance that they then pursued at her villa in Florence. I wonder if I am alone in wondering why Mr. Green should believe that anyone will want to admire such a repulsive combination of facile self-deception and romantic cynicism, much less regard it as some sort of "spirituality or transcendence" to be emulated?

Frankly, though I thought the movie *Reds* was an outrageous example of mendacious fantasy, I have to say that I prefer it to a book like *New York 1913*. For only a fool would expect from Hollywood anything other than a lie when it came to telling the story of radical youth. But for the extended sermon on the beauties of radical innocence that Martin Green has given us in this book there are likely to be readers, especially young readers, who will discover too late—and at some cost to themselves—that this, too, is a Hollywood-type fairy tale that bears little or no relation to either the historical or the moral reality.

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The philosophical porcupine

by Roger Kimball

Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, was born in Vienna in April, 1889, the youngest of eight children. While the house of Wittgenstein had been prominent in Austria since the early nineteenth century, Ludwig's father, Karl, an engineer, moved it from prominence to great riches with his brilliant manipulations of the steel industry. When he died, in 1913, *The Times* of London eulogized him as "The Carnegie of Austria." Though the Wittgensteins were of Jewish ancestry—a fact that Ludwig would later take considerable pains to conceal—they had been Protestant for two generations. His mother, Leopoldine, was Roman Catholic and Ludwig, like his brothers and sisters, was baptized Catholic. Though there are good reasons to describe his *Weltanschauung* as fundamentally religious—Bertrand Russell went so far on one occasion as to call him "a complete mystic" ("mystic" being a term of derision for Russell)—Wittgenstein was not a church-goer and seems to have had little sympathy with what has come to be called "organized religion."

In many respects, the Wittgensteins were the very embodiment of Viennese *haut bourgeois* sensibility and patrician splendor. In the first volume of his new biography of the philosopher, Brian McGuinness, a longtime student of Wittgenstein's thought and a Fellow at Queen's College, Oxford, even employs the adjective *wittgensteinisch* to describe that combination of concentration, largesse, and nervous self-absorption that seemed to define the family.[1] Though he later affected a spartan simplicity that bordered on the comical, Ludwig grew up in an atmosphere of old-world *noblesse oblige*. As befitted this station in life, he displayed an openhanded generosity toward his various cultural enthusiasms, arranging, for example, for a large anonymous gift to Austrian artists and writers that aided Adolf Loos, Georg Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Oskar Kokoschka, among others. Sometimes his benefactions were less effective, as when, during the Great War, he donated one million crowns to the state for the purchase of a 30 cm. caliber mortar to aid the war effort. In any event, Mr. McGuinness is correct that in the opening decades of the century the Wittgensteins "belonged to a spacious world with time as well as energy enough, and above all to a culture not yet fragmented and specialized, so that the music they made, or the pictures they painted, at home differed in degree perhaps but not in kind from the highest achievements of their age." Ludwig's sister Margaret had her portrait painted by Gustav Klimt, and (what is equally impressive) Karl Wittgenstein was often a target of Karl Kraus's barbs in the satirical periodical *Die Fackel*.

1 *Wittgenstein: A Life, Young Ludwig 1889-1921*, by Brian McGuinness; University of California Press, 322 pages, $22.50.

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It was music, especially, that united the family. F. R. Leavis recalled Wittgenstein's once having told him that there were seven grand pianos in one of his family's homes. Clara Schumann had taught Karl Wittgenstein's sisters to play the piano, Brahms was a good family friend, and Leopoldine—who, according to Mr. McGuinness, brought to her household "a moral earnestness and selflessness which it is proper to call extreme"—is said to have been an exceptionally accomplished pianist. Ludwig himself, with characteristic idiosyncrasy, took up the clarinet instead of the piano, and could reputedly whistle with prodigious accuracy, reproducing whole concertos or (a favorite pastime) whistling the melody of Schubert's songs while a friend accompanied him on the piano.

Young Ludwig was educated at home by private tutors until the age of fourteen, when he was sent to secondary school in Linz (the same school that was later attended by Adolf Hitler). He was apparently an indifferent student, though he learned French well and mastered English. Upon graduating in 1906, he decided, *faute de mieux*, to follow in his father's footsteps and embark on a career in engineering. After spending two unhappy years in Berlin studying mechanical engineering and aeronautics, he went to England to continue his studies at Manchester University. He is said to have done important work in aeronautics there; more important, it was around this time that he became interested in the foundations of mathematics and logic, the subjects that would lead him to Cambridge to study philosophy with Bertrand Russell in 1911.

Despite his favored upbringing, Ludwig was visited by much unhappiness and personal tragedy. Three of his four brothers committed suicide, and the fourth, Paul, a pianist, lost his right arm in World War I. (Paul Wittgenstein nonetheless went on to have a distinguished career as a pianist, performing works he commissioned for the left hand.) Ludwig himself was of a melancholy, tortured disposition and, at least as a young adult, often brooded about committing suicide.

All this Mr. McGuinness recounts in his chronicle of the first thirty-one years of Wittgenstein's life (the second volume of his biography will continue the story through 1951, the year of Wittgenstein's death at the age of sixty-two). As anyone acquainted with the reputation of the philosopher would have predicted, Wittgenstein emerges as the very archetype, indeed—as the many stories about him have hardened into academic folklore—almost the very caricature of the angst-ridden genius. Bertrand Russell's remark that Wittgenstein was "perhaps the most perfect example I have known of genius as traditionally conceived, passionate, profound, intense, and dominating" is wholly typical.

It was precisely Wittgenstein's appearance as a "genius as traditionally conceived" (along no doubt with his fortune and solemn good looks) that initially captivated Cambridge academic "society" and won him the attention of everyone from G. E. Moore and Russell to John Maynard Keynes and the Bloomsbury set. For though Wittgenstein's writings are fairly voluminous, he published very little during his lifetime. Aside from the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—a book of some twenty thousand words—he published one brief review of a textbook on logic, an article in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, and an elementary language handbook for schoolchildren. His other major work, the *Philosophical Investigations*, a loosely connected series of remarks dealing with various aspects of language and logic, appeared posthumously in 1953. There have followed numerous volumes of notes, lectures, and miscellaneous reflections, some of them running to five hundred pages.

Because of the myths that have grown up around Wittgenstein, his eccentricities have been amply noted, repeated, elaborated, and sometimes simply invented. Often multiple versions of the same story appear. Russell, whose many passions included an extremely

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well developed taste for gossip, often "improves" his anecdotes about Wittgenstein as he recounts the same incidents in sundry letters and reminiscences. He transforms, for example, what was apparently a shy and even touching appeal by Wittgenstein for guidance and assurance about his philosophical abilities into a typical case of *wittgensteinisch* eccentricity:

> Wittgenstein: "Will you tell me whether I am a complete idiot or not?"
>
> Russell: "My dear fellow, I don't know. Why are you asking me?"
>
> Wittgenstein: "Because, if I am a complete idiot, I shall become an aeronaut; but, if not, I shall become a philosopher."

One of the main privileges of getting to know Wittgenstein—but also, of course, one of the signal liabilities—was having the benefit of his critical acumen. The penetration and fundamental nature of his criticism could sometimes be paralyzing. After digesting Wittgenstein's comments on his work on the theory of knowledge, Russell—not generally a man lacking in self-confidence—confided to his current mistress, Lady Ottoline Morrell, "I saw that he was right and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy." Nor did Wittgenstein confine his criticism to the realm of ideas. He was endlessly analyzing his relations with others, rehearsing his faults and theirs, nursing real or imagined slights, "pulling up feelings by the roots," as Russell put it, "trying to get the exact truth of what one feels towards him."

Wittgenstein's decision to go to Cambridge to study with Russell seems to have been made on the spur of the moment. While we have no conclusive documentary evidence, the great German mathematician Gottlob Frege, whom Wittgenstein visited in 1911, is credited with having advised him to study with Russell, who was seventeen years Wittgenstein's senior and then at the peak of his philosophical powers. After they became acquainted, Wittgenstein would typically come to Russell's rooms to talk at four or five in the afternoon, stay until Russell left for dinner, and then come back in the evening for several more hours of discussion and argument. Like almost everyone who encountered Wittgenstein, Russell would soon come under the spell of his brilliance. Within a year or so he found himself dutifully taking down the reflections on logic that Wittgenstein dictated as he paced the room nervously, just as G. E. Moore would later find himself enlisted as Wittgenstein's amanuensis. But Wittgenstein's captivating effect on Russell was not immediate. Russell's letters to Lady Ottoline at the time provide something of a chronicle of his developing acquaintance with the young philosopher, showing that, in the beginning at least, exasperation competed heartily with admiration in Russell's feelings about his peculiar new student.

> My German friend threatens to be an infliction. (19 October)
>
> My German, who seems to be rather good, was very argumentative. (25 October)
>
> My German was very argumentative and tiresome. He wouldn't admit that it was certain that there was not a rhinoceros in the room. (1 November)
>
> My German engineer, I think, is a fool. He thinks nothing empirical is knowable—I asked him to admit that there was not a rhinoceros in the room, but he wouldn't. (2 November)

As their acquaintance deepened into friendship—and before it disintegrated into the wary formality of botched intimacy, as so often happened with Wittgenstein's friendships—Russell became one of Wittgenstein's spiritual confidants. The role cannot have been an unalloyed blessing. "On arrival," Russell reports, "he would announce that when he left my rooms he

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would commit suicide. So, in spite of getting sleepy, I did not like to turn him out. On one such evening after an hour or two of dead silence, I said to him, 'Wittgenstein, are you thinking about logic or your sins?' 'Both,' he said, and then reverted to silence."

Wittgenstein's impatience led him to rebel against methodical argumentation in favor of an extremely compressed, epigrammatic style of writing. This would assume full flower in Wittgenstein's later obiter dicta, in which, for example, he declares that "a good picture should have the effect of a box on the ear." But already in 1912 we find Russell informing a correspondent that "I told him he ought not simply *state* what he thinks true but give arguments for it, but he said arguments spoil its beauty, and that he would feel as if he was dirtying a flower with muddy hands." Framing arguments, as both the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* show, was not what Wittgenstein thought philosophy was all about. Both works contain arguments; but their main points are made by observation, not demonstration. What Wittgenstein sought were not deliberate arguments proving this or that proposition but *insights*. As Mr. McGuinness notes, "the particular excellence of his mind was his capacity for concentration." He was incessantly looking for *das erlösende Wort*—the formulation that would solve a particular logical problem but also "the saving word," the sudden inspiration that would install order and harmony amidst the chaos of his thoughts and feelings. In this sense, for Wittgenstein the conundrums of logic were not abstracted from the perplexities of everyday life and feeling but were the purest, most concentrated expression of them. "Conversion in its various senses," Mr. McGuinness writes, "is what he wanted in both logic and in life. *The* fundamental problem in logic had to be solved and he had to become a new person."

Nowhere is this connection more evident than in the *Tractatus*. It is an exceedingly odd work, in form as well as content. Wittgenstein organized the book—which comprises a series of brief remarks and observations interspersed with logical formulae—into a series of seven propositions, each of which (except proposition 7, which stands alone and concludes the book) is followed by a series of numbered comments. The format—proposition 1 followed by comments 1.1, 1.11, and so on—gives the book a formidably technical aura. To what extent this *appearance* of logical structure is supported by the actual flow of argument has been a matter of some dispute since the book first appeared in 1921.

The question of its logical structure notwithstanding, though, the *Tractatus* is almost universally considered a landmark of twentieth-century philosophy. Russell agreed to write an introduction for the book (an introduction that is generally conceded to have misrepresented Wittgenstein's thought), and when Wittgenstein later submitted it to be considered as a doctoral dissertation, G. E. Moore is famously said to have reported: "It is my personal opinion that Mr. Wittgenstein's thesis is a work of genius; but, be that as it may, it is certainly well up to the standard required for the Cambridge degree of Doctor of Philosophy." The German title—*Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*—literally means "Logical-Philosophical Treatise." Verbally, it recalls Spinoza's "Theologico-Political Treatise," though what we know of Wittgenstein's reading makes it unlikely that he had encountered the work, still less likely that he named his own work with Spinoza's book in mind. It was Moore who proposed the now famous Latin title, and, as is so often the case in these matters, the idiosyncratic yet peculiarly catchy title has contributed greatly to the book's mystique. So successful has the title been that the book is often known by its Latin title (typically shortened to the *Tractatus*) even among Germans.

Already the first few propositions give one a good sense of the enigmatic character of the book.

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> 1 The world is all that is the case.
>
> 1.1 The world is the totality of facts [*Tatsachen*], not things [*Dinge*].
>
> 1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by their being *all* the facts.
>
> 1.12 For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.
>
> 1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.

It is only in the context of the work as a whole that these "oracular" statements (to adopt A. J. Ayer's characterization) begin to make sense and that it becomes clear that Wittgenstein's main task in the *Tractatus* is to establish once and for all the structure and hence the limits of language, to separate what can be expressed in language from what must forever elude linguistic expression. "The whole sense of the book," Wittgenstein wrote in his preface, "might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence." This anticipates the famous concluding line of the book, proposition 7, where Wittgenstein's exacting prose teeters on the edge of poetry: "*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*"—"What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."

It is clear from his correspondence, too, that Wittgenstein attached a great deal of importance to the inexpressible. Writing about the manuscript of the *Tractatus* to a prospective publisher, Wittgenstein insisted that

> my work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely the second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that it is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it.

The ambition—if ambition it is—to "put everything firmly in place by being silent about it" may be said to be the underlying goal of the *Tractatus*. But because of Wittgenstein's reputation as the paterfamilias of Anglo-American linguistic philosophy, it is important to stress that his fundamental aim in the *Tractatus* was as much ethical as it was logical or linguistic. This is the point of Wittgenstein's remark that "philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity" (4.112)—specifically, an activity that can clarify our thoughts and thus lead us out of the illusions generated by language. A. J. Ayer illuminated this aspect of Wittgenstein's thought when he suggested that, just as Kant attempted to limit the claims of reason in order to make room for faith, so Wittgenstein undertook to mark off the limits of the sayable in order to preserve the integrity of the unsayable. "There are, indeed," Wittgenstein writes, "things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical" (6.522).

Yet despite Wittgenstein's identification of "things that cannot be put into words" as the "mystical," it is perhaps not surprising that the dominant analytic tradition of philosophy has interpreted Wittgenstein to mean that what cannot be put into words is nonsense: not so much the "mystical" as the "mystifying." "For an answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed," Wittgenstein wrote in proposition 6.5. "*The riddle* does not exist." It is easy to see how such statements could be taken as aid and comfort for the tradition of modern language philosophy, one of whose chief abusive epithets was the word "metaphysical." In many respects, things were primed to be read that way: the introduction by Russell, the formidably technical nature of the middle passages of the book, its adoption as a kind of catechism by the philosophical positivists

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that sprang up in Vienna after World War I—all this made it easy to overlook the fact that the last sections of the book, the culmination of Wittgenstein's argument, were in fact deeply opposed to the anti-metaphysical tendency of positivism. As Stephen Toulmin explains in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*,

> far from being a positivist, . . . Wittgenstein had meant the *Tractatus* to be interpreted in exactly the opposite sense. Where the Vienna positivists had equated the "important" with the "verifiable" and dismissed all unverifiable propositions as "unimportant *because* unsayable," the concluding section of the *Tractatus* had insisted—though to deaf ears—that *the unsayable alone has genuine value*. . . . Wittgenstein's silence in the face of the 'unutterable' was not a mocking silence like that of the positivists, but rather a respectful one. Having decided that "value-neutral" facts alone can be expressed in regular proposition form, he exhorted his readers to turn their eyes away from factual propositions to the things of true value—which cannot be *gesagt* [stated] but only *gezeigt* [shown].

I believe Toulmin is correct, though in this context one cannot help remarking the irony that a book that put such stock in clarity of expression should itself invite such radically different interpretations.

It is also worth noting that one of the chief goals of Wittgenstein's philosophy as expressed in the *Tractatus* is to render philosophy obsolete. Because (as Wittgenstein puts it in proposition 6.41) "the sense of the world must lie outside the world," philosophy as traditionally conceived—what is sometimes called "first-order" philosophy—is held to be impossible. Instead of attempting to discuss and to illuminate fundamental epistemological, moral, and aesthetic problems, philosophy, according to Wittgenstein's teaching here, must content itself with demonstrating its own pointlessness. In the penultimate proposition, 6.54, Wittgenstein candidly admits that

> my propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

It is in this sense that Wittgenstein could claim, in his preface to the *Tractatus*, that he considered "the *truth* of the thoughts" he had set forth to be "unassailable and definitive," yet then go on to point out "how little is achieved when these problems are solved."

In other words, in Wittgenstein's view, philosophy—and by extension rational discourse generally—is helpless when confronted with anything that really *matters*. Since "propositions can express nothing that is higher" (6.42), and since philosophy must limit itself to what can be expressed in propositions, philosophy turns out to have a purely negative function. It relieves one of the burden of having to think about pseudo-problems—which prominently include almost the entire pantheon of classic philosophical concerns. ("Philosophical problems arise," Wittgenstein wrote in the *Investigations*, "when language *goes on holiday*.") Philosophy is the ladder one ascends to clarify one's thinking and thereby dispense with philosophy.

Wittgenstein's thought changed radically in the years following the publication of the *Tractatus*. Perhaps the most important change was his abandoning the hope of providing a complete account of *the* logical structure of language; instead of attempting to establish the limits of language, to construct an ideal language in which all true propositions can be clearly expressed, he turned his attention to the rich variety of ordinary language. As he put it in a telling paragraph near the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations*,

> It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are

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> used . . . with what logicians have said about the structure of language.
>
> (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)

But one thing that remained constant between early and late Wittgenstein, between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, was the view of philosophy as a kind of disease that must be overcome. "The real discovery," Wittgenstein writes in the *Investigations*, "is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question." As Mr. McGuinness sums it up at the end of his book, "Philosophy requires logic and logic shows that there can be no philosophy, yet the fact that there can be none turns out to be the greatest liberation."

In this first volume of his biography, Mr. McGuinness takes us through 1921 and the publication of the *Tractatus*. Still to come is his account of Wittgenstein's later life: the renunciation of his great fortune—which he distributed among his siblings so as not to corrupt the poor—his abandonment of philosophy, his six years of teaching schoolchildren in a succession of small villages in the Austrian mountains; his work as an architect, a hotel porter, and as a gardener in a monastery; and the resumption of philosophical work and his return to Cambridge, where he eventually succeeded G. E. Moore as professor of philosophy in 1939.

In many ways, Mr. McGuinness would seem to be the ideal candidate for the task of writing Wittgenstein's biography. A philosopher himself, he is the translator, with D. F. Pears, of the standard English version of the *Tractatus* (1961) and is well equipped to deal with the technical aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy. He ably traces the multifarious influences on Wittgenstein's thought, from Schopenhauer and Tolstoy to Frege, Russell, and Heinrich Hertz. And he has had the support of the Wittgenstein family and literary heirs, enjoying access to many hitherto unplumbed papers and recollections. Indeed, given the fierce loyalty of the Wittgenstein coterie to the memory of the master, their cooperation and support mean that this must be regarded as something of an "authorized" biography, with the usual privileges (unrestricted access to material and persons acquainted with the subject) as well as the usual vices (undue reticence and a reluctance to offend) that one has come to expect from such productions. In addition, while Mr. McGuinness is a familiar of the Wittgenstein circle, he has the distinct advantage of not having known his subject. The very power of Wittgenstein's personality—his knack of overwhelming others emotionally—makes this an asset for anyone undertaking his biography.

But despite these advantages, it must be said that this first volume of Mr. McGuinness's biography, while competent, is a disappointment. There is, it is true, a fair amount of new material presented here; the words "Personal communication" or "Letter in the possession of Wittgenstein's literary heirs" appear often in Mr. McGuinness's footnotes; but I am not sure how much *revealing* new material Mr. McGuinness has unearthed. Readers will encounter fresh details about Wittgenstein's time in Manchester, his Cambridge friendships, his seclusion in Norway in 1913-1914, his courageous service in the Austrian army during the Great War, and so on. But fresh details do not a biography make. Anyone acquainted with the chief contributions to Wittgensteiniana will find Mr. McGuinness treading very familiar territory. The passages devoted to Wittgenstein in Bertrand Russell's autobiographical writings, Norman Malcolm's well-known and compelling memoir of Wittgenstein, published together with a brief but informative biographical sketch by G. H. von Wright, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, the biographical introductions that stand as a

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preface to so many books about Wittgenstein's philosophy (the one included in A. J. Ayer's recent *Wittgenstein* is especially lucid)—together, these give a tolerably full portrait of the philosopher's life and idiosyncrasies.

This is not to say that there was no need for a new biography of Wittgenstein. A work that had synthesized, corrected, and completed our sometimes piecemeal knowledge of Wittgenstein's life and had woven it together with a compelling account of his thought would have been an important intellectual contribution. But Mr. McGuinness has so far managed to avoid doing that—and part of the reason, I suspect, is to be found in the words "volume one." The multi-volume biography has become a popular but often ill-advised enterprise in the last decade or so. What could have been said elegantly between two covers is stretched and padded to fit between four—or six or eight covers. Sometimes, as in Leon Edel's panoramic biography of Henry James, the effort is justified. But all too often the subject or the biographer—or both—fail to merit such lavish attention. Michael Holroyd's tumid, two-volume biography of Wittgenstein's Cambridge acquaintance Lytton Strachey is perhaps the epitome of the "big" biography that swamps its subject and, inevitably, the reader's interest. The first volume of Mr. McGuinness's biography runs to over three hundred pages; presumably the second volume will weigh in similarly. But how much better it would have been to have had a single, four-hundred-page book that gave us in one volume an authoritative overview of Wittgenstein's life and work! Few readers would feel cheated by not having Wittgenstein's years in Manchester or his stint in the army or his experience as a prisoner of war recounted in such meticulous detail—especially when the account is as impersonal and "external" as Mr. McGuinness's account tends to be.

Indeed, another reason that Mr. McGuinness has failed to produce as good a biography as one might have hoped is that he has been too restrained and discreet about inquiring into the personality—as distinct from the thoughts and itinerary—of his subject. In the wake of Arianna Stassinopoulos Huffington's appalling exposé of Picasso, restraint and discretion must more than ever appear as prime virtues in a biographer. But in his passion for discretion—enjoined, perhaps, by Wittgenstein's friends and heirs—Mr. McGuinness threatens to let Wittgenstein the man slip through his fingers. Was Wittgenstein ever in love? It says something about the limitations of Mr. McGuinness's biography that one cannot really answer this question on the basis of the evidence he presents.

Then, too, while we must be grateful that Mr. McGuinness did not feel compelled to dwell on Wittgenstein's sex life, it is a pity that he did not do more to acquaint us with the philosopher's intimate personal relations. In his notorious 1973 book, *Wittgenstein*, William Warren Bartley III portentously confides that in addition to engaging in the usual sorts of biographical research he went "to homosexual bars in Vienna and London in search of those who knew Wittgenstein in another way; and I was successful." He also claims that as a young man Wittgenstein was "given to bouts of extravagant and almost uncontrollable promiscuity" that would take him out to the streets in search of anonymous homosexual encounters. Since Mr. Bartley presents no evidence for these claims, the reader is left to accept them on faith—or to reject them, as most commentators on Wittgenstein have done. But in a full-scale biography of the sort Mr. McGuinness has undertaken, one expects some discussion of these matters, certainly more than the single reference dismissing Mr. Bartley's conjectures as "gratuitous."

This is all the more the case because, at bottom, Mr. McGuinness is probably right in thinking that the primary passions of Wittgenstein's life are to be found in his struggles with *himself*. The essential thing to grasp about Wittgenstein's character is his peculiar combination of tenacity and

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touchiness. Both are evident in all aspects of his life: intellectual, social, emotional. Craving affection, he nonetheless could not bear prolonged intimacy. This is the point of his fondness for Schopenhauer's parable of the porcupines, to which Mr. McGuinness frequently adverts: crowding together for warmth on a winter's day, a group of porcupines are pricked by one another's quills; so they move back and forth until they find a middle distance—a place midway between isolation and intimacy—that they can comfortably endure.

Understandably, Wittgenstein's extreme fastidiousness, ruthless honesty, and readiness to take offense at the slightest demurral made him a most demanding friend. His letters are full of both protestations of affection and detailed explanations about why he must terminate relations with his correspondent. As Mr. McGuinness observes, "though he often asked, in a material sense, very little, he demanded that his individuality should be recognized. Exception must be made for it, rules must be circumvented. The world must be remade to fit his gifts. It was the only way he could make use of them."

But Wittgenstein's touchiness was nothing compared to his honesty and passionate love of the truth. Despite his sometimes forbidding use of language and the assimilation of his thought and intellectual mannerisms into academic linguistic philosophy, Wittgenstein is at bottom an exceedingly *un*academic character. Norman Malcolm and others report that he habitually tried to persuade students to give up their plans to teach philosophy because, as Malcolm put it, "he believed that a normal human being could not be a university teacher and also an honest and serious person." It is in fact a curious irony that this man who detested the academy and was convinced that being a professor of philosophy was "a kind of living death" should have spawned one of the largest academic cottage industries of our time. Wittgenstein's position on professional philosophy is perhaps best summed up in a letter he wrote in 1944: "What is the use of philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life." It remains an open question whether Wittgenstein's own philosophy really helps to improve one's thinking about "the important questions of everyday life." There can be little doubt, however, that his life was a heroic struggle to bring philosophy back to the "important questions"—even if it turned out that philosophy itself had to be sacrificed along the way.

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A dissent on Kiefer

by Jed Perl

Half a century after *Kristallnacht*, the Holocaust is a treasure trove of super-strength imagery that artists are inclined to adapt with little apparent hesitation. In some cases, there's an honest if dangerous effort to bring the unimaginable into line with the needs of the contemporary imagination; elsewhere images are presented in such a way that their precise relation to Hitler's Final Solution is veiled, even obfuscated. The Anselm Kiefer retrospective, currently at the Museum of Modern Art on the final leg of a four-city, nation-wide tour, is a phenomenon that has brought an aestheticized fascination with Nazi Germany to the attention of an enormous public.[1] Kiefer's mammoth images of charred tracks of earth are if nothing else a tabula rasa upon which many critics have inscribed their own overheated associations. And these associations have been abetted by curator Mark Rosenthal's text for the catalogue, which marshals the forces of art-historical scholarship to lend Kiefer's jazzy reputation as a contemporary tragic hero some weight, some dignity, some mythic resonance. Meanwhile, for those of us who are disinclined to take our Zeitgeist readings from the media or the Museum of Modern Art, the appearance of the Holocaust as a motif in half a dozen shows by contemporary Americans suggests that Kiefer is hardly alone as he stirs the once irreducible facts of annihilation into a modern artist's metaphorical stew.

Despite all the attention that's been focused on Anselm Kiefer, people seem uncertain about how to react to his use of modern German—and modern Jewish—history. Because he's creating Art, people assume they have to suspend all (or at least most) reservations. Jews seem to feel almost guilty about their discomfort, as if they would expose a lack of cultural refinement by concluding that the obliteration of their not-too-distant ancestors was a dubious occasion for exercises in the Beautiful or the Sublime. Moreover, art critics, unlike literary critics, have rarely tackled the many aesthetic and extra-aesthetic questions that bear on the Holocaust. Art-world types who praise Kiefer are generally blithely unaware of books such as George Steiner's *Language and Silence*, Alvin Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying*, and Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's *By Words Alone*.

Perhaps the best place to look for some insight into the contemporary fascination with fascist ideology is Saul Friedländer's extraordinary book *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (published in France in 1982 and in the United States by Harper & Row two years later). Friedländer is a Jew who spent his childhood hidden in

1 "Anselm Kiefer" is on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York until January 3. The catalogue, by Mark Rosenthal, is distributed by the Neues Publishing Company at $35 in hardcover. A paperback edition is available at $24.95.

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Nazi-occupied France (this part of his life is related in a widely acclaimed book of reminiscences, *When Memory Comes*); he has also published a number of scholarly works on the Holocaust. In *Reflections of Nazism* he brings to a very difficult subject an impassioned yet somehow cool intelligence. The book is rather unusual in the literature of artistic responses to the Final Solution in that, unlike most studies, which deal with works created by survivors, it focuses on the image of the Holocaust in literature and movies since the Sixties. Though Kiefer isn't mentioned, many of Friedländer's observations throw light on Kiefer's art and reputation.

"Attention," Friedländer writes,

> has gradually shifted from the reevocation of Nazism as such, from the horror and the pain—even if muted by time and transformed into subdued grief and endless meditation—to voluptuous anguish and ravishing images, images one would like to see going on forever .... In the midst of meditation rises a suspicion of complacency. Some kind of limit has been overstepped and uneasiness appears: It is a sign of the new discourse.

Reflections of Nazism is difficult to summarize, probably because much of the beauty of this brief book rests in the elusive, circuitous manner of Friedländer's reasoning, his unwillingness to simplify or to tie together ends better left loose. It's the very porousness of his effects that enables him to suggest some of the strange ways in which "the endless stream of words and images becomes an ever more effective screen hiding the past." Through quotations from Joachim Fest's biography of Hitler and the memoirs of Nazi architect Albert Speer, Friedländer demonstrates how Hitler succeeded in projecting himself as a German hero and his cause as a German cause by swathing Nazi ideals in a kitsch imagery that had a strong hold on the middle-class imagination. Kitsch—which Friedländer, quoting Abraham Moles, calls that "pinnacle of good taste in the absence of taste, of art in ugliness"—still appeals; and Friedländer's central insight is that the contemporary avant-garde's fascination with Nazi images echoes the original appeal of the Nazi mystique. The contemporary artist's response to the symbolic power of Nazism may not be so different from the response of the German of fifty years ago. About this mirroring of the past in the present Friedländer is obviously ambivalent: it's dangerous, but at the same time certain contemporary works may help us to understand something about the overwhelming attraction of a hideous ideology. "In effect," Friedländer writes, "by granting a certain freedom to what is imagined, by accentuating the selection that is exercised by memory, a contemporary re-elaboration presents the reality of the past in a way that sometimes reveals previously unsuspected aspects."

Over and over again Friedländer emphasizes how ambiguous a role Hitler has in contemporary art. Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's movie *Hitler, a Film from Germany* is perhaps the central piece of evidence—a movie that intermingles fascist kitsch, as in the sentimental memoirs of Hitler's valet, with the avant-garde infatuation with kitsch. Of Syberberg's effort, Friedländer writes, "It may result in a masterpiece, but a masterpiece that, one may feel, is tuned to the wrong key." "In facing this past today," Friedländer says later on, "we have come back to words, to images, to phantasms. They billow in serried waves, sometimes covering the black rock that one sees from all sides off the shores of our common history." Aestheticism, he says, is a defense against reality. This, it seems to me, is a perfect description of the appeal of Anselm Kiefer. In Kiefer's work, as in many of the works Friedländer discusses, the Nazi past has become a potent but also elusive presence—a sort of texture, made up of the burnt grays and blacks that evoke charred bodies, a sensuous texture, a texture that seduces more than it illuminates. And this seduction serves to divert our attention from the hard facts.

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Mark Rosenthal, the curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art who wrote the catalogue for the Kiefer retrospective, isn't unaware of some of the problems that Saul Friedländer raises. Rosenthal's essay, however, grows out of a desire to operate in sync with Kiefer, and this ultimately amounts to something like collusion. The Holocaust is barely mentioned; and so the central fact of modern German history, the fact that makes it qualitatively distinct from all other histories, is a mist.

Kiefer's *March Heath* (1974) depicts the wide-open perspectives and dappled birch trees of an area southeast of Berlin that's long been admired by Germans for its natural beauty. Rosenthal tells us that "the area is happily recalled for many Germans in Theodor Fontane's *Walking-Tours through the Brandenburg March*, written in the nineteenth century"; but this wistful, rather literary nostalgia is hardly the point when, as Rosenthal explains, the March Heath that Kiefer presents is layered with metaphoric importance. According to Rosenthal, this is an area "which in this century was lost first to Russia and later to East Germany." And "adding to the multiple associations of the painting is [the fact] that 'Märkischer Heide, märkischer Sand,' an old patriotic tune of the region, becomes a marching song for Hitler's army." To say, as Rosenthal does, that the territory depicted in *March Heath* "has become a sad memento mori of the Nazi experience and the separation of Germany" is both to aggrandize the meaning of a fairly ordinary landscape and to engage in Holocaust control. "Sad memento mori" softens the past, pretties it up; and the equation of "the Nazi experience" with "the separation of Germany" suggests a capitulation to the idea that the Holocaust is merely one calamity among others. Elsewhere, Rosenthal speaks of "the more difficult aspects of [Kiefer's] German heritage"—again, a euphemism. And of how Kiefer "drifted further back in German history"—again, calamity as an atmosphere one floats through.

Also disturbing are some comparisons that Rosenthal makes between Kiefer and other modern or contemporary artists. These art-historical sallies have the effect of deflecting attention from the uniqueness of Kiefer's situation. "In *Cockchafer Fly*," Rosenthal observes, "Kiefer became a kind of war poet, and the blackened, scorched earth his central motif, his Mont Sainte Victoire, as it were, showing the province of the landscape to be human suffering, not the glory of nature." "A kind of war poet" is again a case of prettying things up. The comparison to Cézanne casts Kiefer in a cleansed, elevated, modern-masterish context. To say that Kiefer makes the landscape "the province of . . . human suffering" only points up the way he sanitizes suffering. After all, how much easier it is to imagine a landscape "suffering" than to imagine a person suffering.

Another comparison, this one to Warhol. Speaking of Kiefer's *Ways of Worldly Wisdom*—a painting that includes portraits of figures out of German history "taken from either dictionaries or books about the Third Reich"—Rosenthal says, "Kiefer's depictions recall Gerhard Richter's '48 Portraits' series of 1971-72 and Andy Warhol's many celebrity portraits from the 1960s onward. Like the American artist, Kiefer looks at the heroes of his country in a deadpan way . . . ." No, no. To associate the tongue-in-cheek glamour of Warhol's high-society gang with Kiefer's origins-of-totalitarianism motifs is to make a muddle, and finally to reassure viewers that all subject matter is equal. Here aestheticism is a leveler. And so, a couple of pages later, we're informed that "Kiefer offers art as a theoretical antidote for the terror of human history and the failure of mythic figures." Art as a theoretical antidote to the Holocaust?

In the past few years, Kiefer has visited Israel and begun to take some of his subjects from Old Testament history—he seems to have a particular fondness for Moses and the story of the crossing of the

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Red Sea. Perhaps some will see in this new twist of Kiefer's career a desire to escape the chronology of modern European history. But his tendency to mythologize everything (and Mark Rosenthal's tendency to use art-historical references to further muddy the waters) denies us exactly what we need when we confront Hitler—which is absolute, total clarity. The Kiefer who now memorializes ancient Jewish history was, twenty years ago, going around Europe taking photographs of himself dressed up in Nazi-style gear while giving the Nazi salute. These photographs were put together in a suite called "Occupations," which was published in the magazine *Interfunktionen* in Cologne in 1969—it's the nadir of neo-Nazi campiness. "I do not identify with Nero or Hitler," Kiefer is quoted by Rosenthal as saying, "but I have to re-enact what they did just a little bit in order to understand the madness. That is why I make these attempts to become a fascist." Rosenthal underlines this. "He assumed the identity of the conquering National Socialist . . . . [I]n the flamboyance [!] of the Nazi *Sieg heil* he spares neither the viewer nor himself since he serves as the model for the saluting figure." And: "Kiefer tries on the pose of inhuman cruelty, plunging into a state of spiritual darkness in which he can coolly and almost dispassionately ponder one of the most . . ." It's amazing that this museum catalogue has been greeted with such mildness, with such appreciation.

I very much doubt that Kiefer's early conceptual "Sieg heil" works would have earned him a show at the Modern; voices might have been raised. And yet it's exactly the same love-hate relation to the German past that's earned him his retrospective; only now the same attitudes are packaged in the trappings of high modernist art. As Rosenthal puts it, by 1980 "Kiefer had, in effect, integrated his ongoing thematic concerns with the outsize proportions of Abstract Expressionism and the modernist insistence on the literal qualities of the object." The secret of Kiefer's fame is that a sensational and even I would say pornographic obsession with Nazi atrocities is welded to a mainstream modernist aesthetic. No wonder William Rubin, former Director of Painting and Sculpture at the Modern, said in a *Times Magazine* piece on Kiefer: "I don't think that any of the contemporary American or European painters is as good as Kiefer. He is my bet." Kiefer is a postmodernist that a modernist really can love—or at least a modernist like Rubin who desperately wants to make his peace with the new artistic order.

Kiefer's paint is said to evoke rock and earth, the soil of Germany; and Kiefer tries to heighten our sense of earthiness through the inclusion of handfuls of straw, or the thickening of the paint with sand. This surface is the alpha and omega of Kiefer's art, and yet it's hardly the metaphoric miracle it's been claimed to be. Kiefer treats the canvas as if it were an upended track of land; he wants to imbue the flatness of the support with the lyric physicality of a nature poem. But his strong formalist leanings—and his infatuation with Abstract Expressionism—are in collision with what may or may not be a genuine gift for lyric evocation. Rosenthal has compared Kiefer to Pollock—he sees echoes of Pollock's *Blue Poles* in *The Mastersinger* and *Margarete*. This is Pollock with metaphysical and metaphorical trimmings, and the trimmings seem to come unglued as easily as Kiefer's hunks of straw. Strip away the fancy titles and the little representational doodles and you find paintings that look uncannily like post-Pollock formalist abstraction—especially the recent sensuous yet austere work of Jules Olitski and Lawrence Poons, both of whom, like Kiefer, paint with acrylic and like to build up the surface until it projects fairly far off the wall. In Kiefer's *The Book*, the surface is thickened with acrylic; and the translucent acrylic, after it has dried, is dusted with a dark tone. The effect is Olitski-ish—a kind of optical shimmer. Precisely what the painting lacks is the tactile gravity that we would expect in a painting that invokes earth—the weight that

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we know from some of the great modern expressionist landscapes, from certain Soutines and de Staëls, the late landscapes of Georges Braque, and the canvases of the English contemporary Leon Kossoff.

Kiefer is easy for current taste to assimilate because his sensibility is, at heart, a postwar American sensibility. His sizes are Ab Ex sizes; and, like an Abstract Expressionist, he articulates the surface only insofar as articulation reinforces homogeneity. The perfunctory lines of perspective which Kiefer inscribes here and there do little to create dynamism, or variety, or surprise. There's really next to nothing in these vast paintings. (Some of the smaller ones are more nearly credible.) This is metaphysical formalism, and I don't think the artist I went to the opening with was far from the truth when she commented that "six million Jews had to die so all these people could wear black tie." To claim for a reductive pictorial structure all the meanings that have been claimed for the Kiefers is to conflate the old formalism and the new taste for narrative in the most extreme and disastrous manner.[2] It's fifty years ago that Clement Greenberg declared the absolute separation of high and low taste in his essay "Avant-garde and Kitsch." Now, with Kiefer, the sort of optically alluring surface that characterizes what has been called Greenbergian abstraction is joined to a voyeuristic sentimentalizing of Jewish history we'd normally expect to encounter in a TV miniseries or a trashy novel. The end result of Greenbergian taste—the heavily impastoed acrylic surfaces of Olitski and Poons—has been joined to a romantic infatuation for Nazi kitsch.

Just after I saw the Kiefer retrospective, I read *The Drowned and the Saved*, the book Primo Levi completed before his suicide in 1987.[3] It's quite different in tone from Levi's earlier memoirs in that he has now left behind the narrative made up of anecdotes and portraits-in-miniature in favor of a severe essay style. Gone for the most part is the comfortable, consoling effect of painted scenes; here there are only a few hard facts, presented without halftones. It's a purified, skeletal book; and after I'd started it, I couldn't put it down, and found myself staying up late, both hands clutching the pages very tight, until I'd gotten to the end. In the closing chapter, "Letters from Germans," Levi describes some of the correspondence he received after *Survival in Auschwitz* was published in Germany. In particular, he details a long exchange of letters with a woman, Mrs. Hety S. of Wiesbaden, who came from a family of leftists, had kept clear of the Nazis, and was, as he says, of all his correspondents "the only German 'with clean credentials' and therefore not entangled with guilt feelings." In one of the letters that Levi quotes, Mrs. S. writes, "For many among us words like 'Germany' and 'Fatherland' have forever lost the meaning they once had: the concept of the 'Fatherland' has been obliterated for us." It's exactly this concept that Kiefer is trying to reinstate.

But if Kiefer's staggering success tells us something about Germany today, it may tell us even more about how desperately people in the art world want to believe that art has

2 Jean Baudrillard, the French thinker whose books all the fashionable artists want to have in their studios, has said, "We are witnessing the end of perspective and panoptic space (which remains a moral hypothesis bound up with every classical analysis of the 'objective'), and hence *the very abolition of the spectacular*." Kiefer's work, flirting as it does with perspective and panoptic space, aims precisely to be spectacular. This, no doubt, is part of Kiefer's appeal at a moment when the very idea of life as an interesting spectacle can appear endangered. Nazism, come to think of it, is the perfect field of study for fashionable artists who are both nostalgic for spectacle and obsessed with its deconstruction. The Nuremberg rallies and the nightmare of the camps can be viewed as the ultimate anti-spectacle spectacles—inimitable, sui generis.

3 *The Drowned and the Saved*, by Primo Levi; Summit, 203 pages, $17.95.

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content, always more content, and how willing they are to believe that content exists not so much within the work as in a drama that's grafted onto the work. It's an overpowering sense that the Holocaust is the ultimate *event* of modern history that attracts artists now. Robert Morris, for instance, used photographs of piles of corpses in the concentration camps as one of the raw materials in a series of mixed-media wallworks on apocalyptic themes that were shown at the Castelli and Sonnabend galleries last season.[4] Within a few months of Morris's show, there was a painting in Jerome Witkin's show at the Sherry French Gallery called *Terminal*, which represented a young Jewish man, a huge Star of David on his lapel, sitting in a cattle car; and there was a collage in Joan Snyder's show at Hirschl & Adler Modern called *Women in Camps*, which included photographs of Jewish women, also wearing the Jewish star. This fall the Starn Twins have weighed in with Holocaust imagery. The *Lack of Compassion Series*, in the Castelli Gallery half of their two-part show, consisted of a photograph of concentration camp dead mounted on a large board of pale blond wood with, ranged around it, narrower planks of wood, each bearing a black-and-white photograph of the face of a martyred hero—from Gandhi to J.F.K. to Steve Biko. The *Lack of Compassion Series* had a cool, knowingly Age-of-Mechanical-Reproduction look; perhaps the Starns thought it would be as easy to illuminate the Holocaust as to flick on a light switch upon entering a darkened room. And if all this hadn't been enough, in October the abstract painter Gary Stephan included in his show, at Hirschl & Adler Modern, paintings entitled *The Stacks* and *Ashes*, and let it be known via Lisa Liebmann's catalogue essay that "they have to do with the Holocaust."

Relative to the size of the New York art world, something like half a dozen shows may not seem very many; but the range and diversity of artists apparently drawn to similar themes—from an academic realist such as Jerome Witkin to the internationally acclaimed subject of a MOMA retrospective such as Kiefer to darlings of the next wave such as the Starns—is pretty impressive. Witkin's brand of narrative painting (which is finicky about naturalistic detail and attuned to spectacle as sentiment) may have no connection whatsoever to Joan Snyder's experiments in collage (which walk a tightrope between the aestheticizing and the politicizing) except that there seems to be, all over town, this reach into the central catastrophe of modern European history. In the spectral bodies of concentration camp victims some will see resemblances to the contemporary ravages of AIDS; while others, especially Jews approaching middle age, may believe the time has come to confront the most essential and painful aspects of their communal past. Trying to hold in one's mind such diverse impulses expressed at such different levels of artistic seriousness is difficult, perhaps impossible . . .

Recently, in the catalogue of Judy Rifka's show at the Brooke Alexander Gallery, Robert Pincus-Witten observed that many artists want to restore "our strained belief in transcendence." Nothing strains the belief in transcendence quite like the Holocaust. And, perhaps, no event bears so immediately on the possibility for transcendence. To admit the Holocaust into contemporary art is to admit experience in its most

4 In her 1974 essay "Fascinating Fascism," Susan Sontag observes that "the poster Robert Morris made for his recent show at the Castelli Gallery is a photograph of the artist, naked to the waist, wearing dark glasses, what appears to be a Nazi helmet, and a spiked steel collar, attached to which is a stout chain which he holds in his manacled, uplifted hands. Morris is said to have considered this to be the only image that still has any power to shock." A little over a decade later, using photographs of the death camps, Morris has topped himself. From s-and-m imagery to Holocaust imagery is quite a leap—a recapitulation of Nazi history that may also, consciously or unconsciously, mirror one trajectory of contemporary sexual experimentation, whereby some who back then took up s-and-m are now losing their lives to AIDS.

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extreme, uncontrollable, and incomprehensible form. It's a subject no artist may be equal to; certainly most who attempt it will be defeated even before they begin.

As for Anselm Kiefer, we can say for sure that no artist has gambled more on the appeal of the Holocaust as a symbol. I would argue that Kiefer's troubles begin right there, because to treat the Holocaust as a symbol is to belittle it, to make it bearable. Maybe that's what people really like about his work. The advertisements that the Museum of Modern Art is running for the Kiefer show present him as a special case, an *interesting* case. "Something big," the headline informs us, "is happening at the Museum of Modern Art." Kiefer, we're told, "paints public memories mixed with private dreams—as he shuns the comfort of custom and fashion. Only 43 years old, he has already challenged the traditional ideas of what an artist is and does. . . . Kiefer's work demonstrates that boundaries of time and place need not be barriers to creativity." I'm not exactly clear on what this all means, except that the Modern knows it has a-hit-that's-much-more-than-an-art-show on its hands and feels no compunction about milking it for all it's worth. One thing is for sure: new-style content has never had so sweet a revenge on old-style formalism as right now, when they're hyping the Holocaust at, of all places, the Museum of Modern Art.

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Zamyatin: a heretic for all times

by David Gurewich

Through the first four hundred years after the publication of *Utopia*, the writers who dared look into the future followed, more or less, in Sir Thomas More's footsteps. Anti-utopia as a literary genre belongs to the twentieth century. This is not necessarily a cause for jeremiads, invocations of the names of Stalin or Hitler, or other forms of hand-wringing. Just as to some people a pessimist is an informed optimist, anti-utopia may be construed as an *informed* utopia. Philosophically, both genres are traceable to Plato's *Republic*. Whether that work should be labeled a utopia or anti-utopia depends on your taste for benevolent rulers; and what ruler has ever declared himself malevolent?

Ask a more or less educated person about anti-utopia, and three names pop up almost automatically: Orwell, Huxley, and Zamyatin. Of the three, Orwell, with *1984*, is undoubtedly the most popular, and for good reason: his writing is brilliantly simple, his ideas are easy to digest, and, in our politicized age, his frame of reference is first and foremost political. Huxley's *Brave New World,* by contrast, is the outcry of an alarmed aesthete against mass culture, and, though interesting in its way (many of his "dire" predictions turned out to be so timid as to come true), not nearly so powerful or enduring as Orwell's book.

It fell to Zamyatin to straddle politics and culture. Despite having preceded the other two writers and having directly influenced Orwell (who acknowledges the debt in his article "Freedom and Happiness"), he is the least known of the three. The reasons for his obscurity roughly mirror the ones for Orwell's popularity: his writing is highly imaginative and hard to translate, his ideas are complex, and he is more an artist than a political writer. The emotional tenor of the two writers also lends itself to popularity in different degrees: the totalitarianism in Orwell's time is more advanced than in Zamyatin's, and, understandably, Orwell treats it with fear and loathing—emotions far more accessible than the ironic contempt to be found in Zamyatin's anti-utopian masterpiece, *We*.

But, just as there is more to Orwell than *1984*, there is more to Zamyatin than *We*, and some—not all—of it deserves to be known better. Ardis Publishers, a house that specializes in Russian literature, has recently helped to fill this gap by bringing out an early novel of Zamyatin's in its first English-language edition. At the same time, Ardis has published a collection of scholarly essays on Zamyatin's *We*. Both books, each in its own way, give us a better understanding of this talented and complex writer, whose political ideas and modernist aesthetics are as vital today as they were sixty years ago.

Evgeny Zamyatin was born in 1884 (a cabalistically inclined reader is welcome to add a hundred years), in the small town of

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Lebedyan—the Peoria of Russia, located about two hundred miles south of Moscow. Yet he did not bemoan the provinciality of his hometown. To him, as he put it in an autobiographical sketch that was published in 1929, Lebedyan was "famous for its card sharks, gypsies, horse fairs, and the strongest Russian language—[his was] the Lebedyan described by Tolstoy and Turgenev."

What he loathed was the institutional boredom of his school years, where the only splash of color in the grayness of daily routine was the red flag on the fire station's tower. The flag was devoid of political meaning; it just signaled that the temperature had slipped below minus twenty Celsius. "A one-day revolution," he notes wryly in his sketch.

Upon graduation from secondary school, Zamyatin enrolled at the Polytechnic Institute in St. Petersburg. The year being 1902, how could he stay out of politics? "In those years," he wrote, "to be a Bolshevik meant following the path of the most resistance; and *then* I was a Bolshevik." Demonstrations, strikes, rallies—he had to be a part of it all, including the Battleship Potemkin riot in Odessa in 1905. In December of that year he was arrested in a police raid ("on the table were plans, Parabellums, Mausers [types of handguns]"). He spent a few months in solitary, studying shorthand and English and writing poetry ("inevitably"). In the spring of 1906 he was freed and exiled back to Lebedyan.

At twenty-two, Zamyatin treated this altercation with the law as nothing more than a mishap, and he lost no time in going back to St. Petersburg—illegally. More politics: "campaigning, posters, flyers, speeches, ballot boxes." He was detained for violating his parole, but, due to a bureaucratic error, stayed in the capital for another five years. In the meantime, he graduated from the shipbuilding department of the Polytechnic and entered graduate school, becoming an instructor in 1911. A promising young engineer, he was sent in 1916 to England to supervise the construction of a Russian icebreaker. (The modern equivalent would be a member of the Weather Underground getting a job with NASA. With this kind of security in Russia, what took the Bolsheviks so long to take over?)

Engineering and revolution were not enough for Zamyatin, however. In 1908, his first story, written simultaneously with his graduation thesis, was published in the newspaper *Education*, and in 1912 he gained recognition with the dark, brooding novella "Provincial Life." Still actively pursuing a shipbuilding career, he wrote more stories and another novella, this one entitled *A Godforsaken Hole* (1914).

Zamyatin hurried back home from England at the first news of the Revolution. "The joyful, horrible winter of 1917-18," he recalled, "when everything shifted, and took off into the unknown." Amid the chaos of these years, he still pursued his dual careers, although the accent was now on literature. While teaching engineering at his alma mater, he wholeheartedly plunged himself into the literary life. He wrote stories (and adapted them for the stage), edited books, served on editorial boards, and even taught creative writing. He was also at the center of a loose group of prominent young writers who called themselves the "Serapion Brothers" (after a collection of stories by E. T. A. Hoffmann).

It was not long before Zamyatin grew disenchanted with the revolutionary regime. His disenchantment showed in his stories and, especially, in his articles, in which he lashed out against his revolutionary colleagues, who (he pointed out) bent over backward to toe the Party line. "Most of all, contemporary literature lacks truthfulness," he wrote in one article. "The writer is lying through his teeth; he is too used to speaking while looking over his shoulder."

The culmination of Zamyatin's criticism of the regime was, of course, *We*, a stinging satire of the happy future promised by the Party. The book was finished in 1920 and widely read in what is now called Samizdat;

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not surprisingly, it never made it to the state's printing presses. In 1922, Zamyatin was arrested and (incredibly) placed in the same cell he had occupied seventeen years earlier. (The arrest was rumored to be somehow connected with *We*, although the details are sketchy.) He was soon released and returned to what is now Leningrad.

In the event, *We* became something of a watershed for Zamyatin. The English-language publication of the book in 1924 finally supplied his critics—whose numbers had been growing—with the ammunition they needed. From then on, he became a non-person, denied publication and constantly harangued in the media until he could stand it no longer. In 1931 he wrote an extraordinary letter to Stalin, requesting permission to leave the USSR. Thanks to the intercession of Maxim Gorky, permission was granted. Gorky, the titan of proletarian letters, considered Zamyatin's novel "hopelessly bad, a completely sterile thing," but there was apparently still some decency left in him. (Decades later, his successors at the helm of the Writers' Union would be less tolerant: in the late 1960s, Mikhail Sholokhov demanded—futilely, needless to say—that Solzhenitsyn be executed.)

Zamyatin's last years in Paris were an exile's nightmare. He did not get along with the virulently monarchist émigré community, and he was barely known to the Western literati. He wrote a few pieces on the theater for French papers, some stories; he started a novel on Attila the Hun . . . Money was scarce, his health was fading (*angina pectoris*). He died in 1937, lonely, broken, and homesick.

On paper, Zamyatin's literary output looks relatively modest: a finished novel; a number of novellas and short stories; a few plays, some literary criticism, and an unfinished novel. It can also count as a lot, considering his versatility and the number of careers he juggled in his lifetime.

"Provincial Life" (1912) was his first big success. The story follows the progress of Anfim Baryba from school dropout to kept man to petty thief to false witness to village policeman. Its territory—the bestiality of Russian provincial life—was already well trodden by Gogol, Chekhov, and others before him. But Zamyatin's province is much darker than that of his predecessors; reason is soundly asleep. Anfim's rise takes place in a prelapsarian bog; the main passions of the characters are God, food, and vodka, and not necessarily in that order.

"Provincial Life" is an artistic quantum leap from the nineteenth century. It is closer to a poem, with its chopped sentences and striking rhythms, or to a painting, with its wild images, which are as rich in color as the characters' meals are rich in calories. It is a work both very young, in the boldness of its experiment, and mature, in the confidence of the author's voice. The distinctive features of Zamyatin's prose are in place: his stylized use of colloquial, uneducated speech, and his endless—some might say excessive—lexical and grammatical coinages.

In his next short stories, "Alatyr" and "The Womb," Zamyatin honed his narrative skills and delved deeper into the abyss of provincial life. Then came *A Godforsaken Hole* (a most infelicitous translation of the title, but more on that later), the novella which crowns his pre-1917 prose.

A Godforsaken Hole was written in 1913-14, and published in *Zavety* magazine in 1914. The censor deemed it a slander of the military and confiscated the issue. It should be pointed out that, from the days of Pushkin and Benkendorf, tzarist censors, unlike their Soviet successors, considered their primary weapon the carrot rather than the stick. So one can imagine how gravely offended they were by the novella's damning picture of the army. A halfhearted suit was brought against Zamyatin in the same year. It was delayed by the start of World War I (one would have thought the war might *expedite* it) and finally won by Zamyatin in 1916—oddly, in the middle of a war that was still popular in Russia. Ten years later,

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when Zamyatin ran into trouble with Russia's new rulers, he would be less fortunate.

The novella is positioned on the intersection of two time-honored Russian literary subjects: the philistinism ("*meschanstvo*") of provincial life and the moral disintegration of the Russian army. Aleksandr Kuprin's 1905 novel *Duel*—perhaps the best-known treatment of the latter theme—is a clear forerunner to Zamyatin's book. But stylistically the two writers are very different. Kuprin was writing in the mainstream of nineteenth-century critical realism; Zamyatin, conversely, was a thoroughgoing twentieth-century modernist. Indeed, he called himself a "synthetist" or "neo-realist" (not to be confused with Rossellini or Visconti); that is, he relied on wild, seemingly unrelated snapshots to reflect the frenetic tempo of the modern era.

Zamyatin's protagonist in *A Godforsaken Hole*, Andrei Ivanych, is a young, idealistic Army officer who arrives to serve at an army base on the Russian Pacific Coast. The novella opens with masterly brio:

> Every man has something that sums him up all at once, something that sets him apart from a thousand others. And in Andrei Ivanych that something was—a forehead: the width and breadth of the steppe. Next to the forehead in question was a teeny nose—a pert Russian pug, accompanied by a flaxen mustache and infantry epaulets. When creating him, the good Lord had waved his hands and—presto: a forehead. But then the Lord yawned; boredom set in, so he finished the job haphazardly, any old way, just to get it done. And so, ushered in by God's yawn, Andrei Ivanych went forth to live his life.

With quick, expressionistic strokes Zamyatin goes on to sketch Andrei Ivanych's past: a short-lived infatuation with learning, replaced by one with music, soon to turn into one directed at a *teacher* of music. "To start with a clean slate," he writes of his hero's newest aspirations, "the hell with the old, to bounce off to the end of the world. And then, love of the most genuine kind, and a book to be written that will conquer the world . . . ." It takes Zamyatin less than a page to re-create a full-blooded character, emotions and all, that American minimalist writers would struggle through a grim twenty-page story to convey.

The main plot, as told through the eyes of Andrei Ivanych, is simple: the base commander, General Azancheyev, an obese brute, is justly accused by Captain Schmidt, the paymaster, of stealing his soldiers' rations. In response, the general slanders Schmidt's young wife, Marusya. In the best Russian tradition, Schmidt slaps him. The general sends him away and blackmails Marusya for sex—or else Schmidt will be court-martialed. (It is difficult to imagine such goings-on from one of Tolstoy's hussars, those *chevaliers sans peur et reproche*! The Russian army had changed since 1812, and so had Russian literature since *War and Peace*.)

Marusya gives in, and the cowardly general escapes to the nearest town, leaving Schmidt to torment himself, Marusya, and everybody else, including an innocent soldier and even a baby jackdaw. After unsuccessfully challenging Andrei Ivanych to a duel, Schmidt kills himself.

Other characters fare little better. The general's wife goes insane after losing her baby. Her spinster sister spends her time spying on the general through a peephole. The wife of Captain Nechesa, another officer at the base, is tormented by her nine children, all by different fathers. One Lt. Tikhmen suspects that the latest could be his, but no one—least of all Mrs. Nechesa—knows the truth. Consumed by unrequited paternal love and humiliated by Captain Nechesa, Tikhmen kills himself. This is pure Chekhov, stripped of all hope and varnished with twentieth-century *Angst*.

As befits a socially conscientious novel, the cruelty of the upper classes is vented on their social inferiors: soldiers get beaten regularly. But Zamyatin is too smart a

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writer to fall for easy moralizing; he realizes the superficiality of class distinctions. (Both soldiers and officers speak horrible, uncultured Russian; the soldiers' talk is simply uneducated, while the officers' is perverted by pseudo-cultural pretense.) Thus, the soldiers extend the chain of cruelty to the local Chinese population. Killing the latter, whether for sport (by the officers) or profit (by the soldiers), is a misdemeanor at best.

The only fully sympathetic character in the book is Marusya, the victim of both the general's lust and her husband's egotism, and, as it happens, the object of Andrei Ivanych's romantic worship as well. Although her relationship with Schmidt smacks of sadomasochism, Zamyatin is clearly in her corner. Indeed, had Zamyatin been a woman, feminist critics would have adopted him long ago. He shows a special sympathy toward his female characters, not only Marusya but also Afimiya in "The Womb" and later (and most notably) the character of I-330 in *We*.

It is with Andrei Ivanych that Zamyatin has the biggest ax to grind. With deadly satire, he shows the hero's adolescent crush on Marusya, and his inability to act, to protect her, to combat the evil. By having Andrei Ivanych helplessly join the drunken crowd at Schmidt's wake, rather than kill the general or himself, Zamyatin debunks the whole tradition of nineteenth-century romantic heroes. Here, as in his pre-1917 prose in general, he meets the ideological requirements set forth by influential socialist critics of his time—who called Andrei Ivanyches "superfluous" and accused them of being useless in the proletariat's struggle—without compromising his modernist aesthetics. It would be impossible for him to continue to do so after 1917.

Artistically, *A Godforsaken Hole* is an unqualified pleasure. Zamyatin's style is precise and highly emotional at the same time. His splashy expressionist images are leavened by realistic touches. Here is his description of a smoke-filled room:

> In the din, in the reddish fog—not men, but their bits and pieces: here, a watermelon of a bald head; there, slashed by a cloud, the bear-like legs of Captain Nechesa; farther away, a cluster of hairy fists, suspended in the air.

Alas, little of this imagery comes through in the recent translation of *A Godforsaken Hole* by Walker Foard, published by Ardis.[1] Since it is the only English translation currently available, we should be grateful for it, but we should also be careful to distinguish it from a completely faithful rendering of Zamyatin's prose.

By now the reader probably realizes that translating Zamyatin is no picnic. Mr. Foard struggles valiantly, often—and to his credit—finding equivalents for words so obscure and outdated as to pose a problem for even a native speaker (for example: *manza*, a pejorative racial epithet that he correctly renders as "Chink"). He fares less well with idioms, however, and the book contains a fair share of errors, most of them attributable to Zamyatin's ellipses and his sneaky use of folksy metaphor. For example: *pud soli s'est'* means not *to break bread* but *to share an ordeal*. When Foard literally translates *bel'mo* as *cataract*, referring to an ugly chair in an empty room, he misses the point: Zamyatin has merely abbreviated the expression *bel'mo v glazu*, which means *eyesore*.

Elsewhere, Foard cannot make the required transition into the native speaker's shoes. To take one obvious example: When Zamyatin has the general offer Schmidt exotic—to a Russian—*ravioli*, and then has Schmidt accept an ordinary Russian *pirozhok*, he seeks to expose the general's pretentiousness. Foard renders both words literally, without taking into account that *pirozhok* is more foreign to an American reader than *ravioli*—which by now is probably as American as pizza. The effect is thus the opposite of the one which Zamyatin intended.

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1 *A Godforsaken Hole*, by Evgeny Zamyatin, translated by Walker Foard; Ardis, 110 pages, $17.95.

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And then there is the problem of the title. In the text, Zamyatin repeatedly uses the expression *k chertu na kulichki*, literally, "to the devil's neck of the woods"; Foard is justified in using "a godforsaken hole" on these occasions. But the title reads simply, *Na kulichkakh*, a lightly ironic expression better rendered as, for example, *In the Sticks*—anything milder than *A Godforsaken Hole*.

However numerous such errors (I pick representative cases, not the most egregious), they would not interfere with most people's sense of Zamyatin so long as the general tenor of the book was preserved. Yet, just as God created Andrei Ivanych's forehead and gave up on the rest, so does Mr. Foard seem to have expended his energies on the quest for obscure words. The rhythm of Zamyatin's prose, now elliptical, now excessive, always poetic, eludes him completely. Here is an example of Zamyatin's Russian, in a rough translation of my own:

> Lent, damp and warm. Mud sloshing underfoot—so bad, it will swallow you any minute.
>
> And it does. Sleepy, on your last legs, you sink, and, nodding off, you beg: "God, a war . . . a fire. . . a binge . . . send me anything."

Here is Foard's version of the same passage:

> Lent began—the weather turned damp and warm. Mud sloshed underfoot—sloshed so much that it threatened to swallow a man.
>
> And it did so. Already lacking the strength to crawl, a sleepy man sinks down, and dropping off to sleep, implores: "Oh, let there be a war . . . or a fire . . . or at least some heavy drinking . . . ."

Now, Zamyatin's Russian is idiosyncratic enough to allow for an infinite variety of English versions; but even so Mr. Foard's seems off the mark. Take the first phrase: *"Post veliky, mokret,' teplyn.'"* Four words. What they call an "impersonal sentence," and what I would call Russian emotional minimalism. Foard's "Lent began—the weather turned damp and warm" is much too formal. *Mokret'* and *teplyn'* mean "dampness" and "warmth" respectively, but, unlike English nouns, they are highly colloquial, almost folksy, the former even slang—certainly way below the literary diction of "the weather turned."

The rest of the passage is little better. Indeed, with his nineteenth-century past tense, his inclusion of nonexistent words (like "threatened to"), his romantic-poetic "Oh, let there be . . . ," and, finally, his soberly out-of-place "heavy drinking" (to call a terse Russian colloquialism like *zapoi* "heavy drinking" is like calling acid a "hallucination-inducing substance"), Foard turns the wonderfully unruly mane of hair that is Zamyatin's prose into a barbershop showpiece with every hair in place.

In short, in this Ardis edition we get the outlines of Zamyatin's story and characters, but none of the spirit of his presentation of them. Since *A Godforsaken Hole* is an accomplished minor novel by a major writer, and an interesting book in its own right, we might hope for something better from English translators in the future.

Zamyatin's stay in Britain in 1916-17—two years after the appearance of *A Godforsaken Hole*—resulted in two novellas: *The Islanders* and *The Fisher of Men*. These rather snide satires touch upon the surface of British life, raising its hypocrisy to a kind of ritual. They are worth mentioning only in relation to *We*. Were one to argue (as many do with regard to *1984*) that the thrust of the author's anti-utopian satire goes beyond socialism, these novellas would serve as evidence: Zamyatin's attitude to the British way of life (and, by extension, capitalism) is decidedly hostile. On the other hand, he was a consummate free spirit, who (as we shall see) was not greatly fond of *any* stable system.

In retrospect, Zamyatin's disenchantment with the Bolsheviks upon his return to Russia after the Revolution was predictable. Underneath his revolutionary student

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rhetoric he was an ordinary liberal, and the violence that is the *sine qua non* of revolution could only repel him. Living in wartime Petrograd, he could see the dehumanizing effect of the new social order. His stories of that period, "Mamai" and "The Cave," prefigure the urban satires of Yury Olesha and, later, Mikhail Zoschenko. Now he treats his hapless Andrei Ivanyches, lowly characters who are unable to cope with the ordeals of the new life, with greater sympathy. Mamai (a witty choice of name, evoking the cruel Tatar *khan* of the fourteenth century) shudders at the thought of having to use a gun on potential robbers, and later plots to steal the last of his family's money to buy a rare book. Martin Martinych in "The Cave" steals his neighbor's firewood for his wife's birthday. These portraits of "little people" pounded by merciless social realities are reminiscent of Gogol's *Overcoat*—but the tzars' censors were better equipped to deal with this sort of criticism than the Soviets. A reviewer wrote of "The Cave": "Not a word about . . . Bolsheviks, but the entire story is pointed against them . . . . Here one discovers quite clearly that the author is a cold and hostile observer. Only one who did not take an active part in the events and the struggle can write like this." It was easy for Zamyatin, with his revolutionary jail record, to refute the latter charge—but the accusations mounted.

Although these stories are well polished and powerful in their own quiet way, one leaves them with a mixed feeling as to Zamyatin's attitude toward the regime. This ambiguity may well have been intentional, since the stories were meant to reflect a period of great uncertainty. At the same time, the stories reflect his own ambivalence: as an artist, Zamyatin was above all honest, and the gap between the Revolution's goals, toward which he was sympathetic, and its reality, which horrified him, was fast becoming too wide to ignore. He was more outspoken about his doubts in his newspaper articles from this period. In a 1921 piece entitled "I Fear," he wrote: "I fear that Russian literature has only one future: its own past."

These are strong words, and they were duly noted by his opponents. He wrote enough such statements that, even if *We* had never been written, it is hard to believe that Zamyatin's fate would have been any different. The rulers demanded unconditional loyalty; Zamyatin the artist could not render unto Caesar what was the Muse's.

The first Russian-language edition of *We*, published in Prague, was amended intentionally, to protect the author from persecution (with little effect, as it turned out). The standard Russian-language edition was published many years later, in 1952, by the Chekhov House in New York. It is presumably based upon a manuscript that was sent to New York in 1921 for English translation, but there is some doubt about its faithfulness to the original manuscript, whose location is unknown (some Soviet archive, perhaps).

Just as *We* occupies a special place in world literature, its place in Zamyatin's work is special, too. All his works have a satirical edge, but *We* is the only pure satire he ever wrote.

The novel, set in a distant future, is narrated through the diary of its protagonist, D-503, the chief designer of "Integral," the spaceship that would travel to other worlds for missionary purposes. The first entry, copied from the *State Paper*, reads: "If they [aliens] do not understand that we bring them mathematically infallible happiness, it is our duty to make them happy." The statement has a military ring to it: the fate of those refusing happiness is sealed. As always, Zamyatin wastes no time in setting the tone of the book.

The world is ruled by the omnipotent Single State, headed by the Benefactor (who, in his baldness, resembles Lenin). The Table of Hourly Commandments schedules all daily activities: waking, working, walking, even sex—at which time the citizens are allowed to draw the shades (they live—literally—in glass houses). All

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citizens are designated by letter/number combinations: consonants/odd numbers for men, vowels/even numbers for women (sort of like California during the oil crisis).

Like his fellow numbers, D-503 is happy. He waxes poetic about The Table of Hourly Commandments and its predecessor, the Railroad Schedule, that "classic of ancient literature." His world is run on a simple formula: happiness equals bliss divided by envy. With total equality, envy is gone, and the value of the fraction—happiness—goes to infinity.

But then D-503 runs into I-330—with her "dazzling, almost vicious teeth"—and his world falls apart. She's an oddball: drinks, smokes, likes old music, old clothes—she's even sarcastic! (In modern American parlance, she has an "attitude problem.") D-503 has had disturbing thoughts before: $\sqrt{-1}$, for example, an irrational number—how is that possible? But never like this. As I-330 draws him deeper into her world, he realizes that he is in love; he is afflicted with having a soul.

I-330 belongs to the "Mephis," a revolutionary group who live beyond the Green Wall, outside D-503's world. They attempt to seize his spaceship, but fail. Meanwhile, the soul epidemic spreads, and the Single State decrees that all citizens must have their "imagination centers" removed. D-503 subjects himself to this "fantasectomy" and betrays I-330, who is tortured and executed in the Benefactor's Machine. In the end, D-503 is back to normal. "And I hope we will overcome," he thinks. "Moreover, I'm sure we will. Because reason must overcome."

If this all seems familiar from dozens of other books and films that depict a dehumanizing, totalitarian world, let me remind you that it was written almost seventy years ago, and has been imitated many times since. Moreover, it is not mere science fiction, but a political satire of a doctrine that was (and is) all too real. When it comes to the book's influence on Orwell—an important question, given the enormous popularity of *1984*—the issue of imitation cannot be resolved in simple terms, especially since reality itself evolved in complex ways between 1920 and 1948, the year *1984* appeared. In short, there is no way of determining whether Orwell's novel owes more to the fiction of *We* or to the reality that evolved in Stalin's Russia.

We has been translated into English four times, with varying results; Mirra Ginsburg's translation (Bantam, 1972) seems to have been accepted as the standard. *We* is, on balance, an easier piece to translate than *A Godforsaken Hole*, lacking the mind-boggling dialect and colloquialisms. Nevertheless, some of the criticism of Mr. Foard applies to Mirra Ginsburg as well, albeit on a much smaller scale. She slips especially in rendering dialogue. In *We* this is the harder part; Zamyatin consciously makes his characters, especially D-503 and his previous lover O-90, so unsure, so afraid of their feelings, that they rarely finish their sentences, which requires a particular sensitivity on the part of the translator. Mirra Ginsburg cheerfully undertakes to finish what she considers an unfinished job, converting the ellipses to full stops; in the narrative, this makes D-503 appear more coherent than he is in Russian, and in the dialogue it leads to misinterpretations.

There are other oddities that would raise an American reader's eyebrows, like the reference to "Pythagoras's trousers"; this is a literal translation of "*Pyfagorovy shtany* [vo vse storony ravny]," a schoolkid's jocular ditty, meant to help to memorize the Pythagorean theorem. When D-503 talks about his "*ratnye nogi*," he surely means that his legs—not his feet—feel "like cotton." And there are other minor slips. When O-90 says to D-503, "*Gulyat*,'" she is being coquettishly strict with him (the Russian infinitive form implies a command); she is certainly saying something more subtle than "Let's go for a walk." But such goofs are not numerous, and the translation on the whole gives a fairly good idea of the book.

And what a book it is! Even in the 1980s, after all the literary imitation and all the political developments that have happened

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since the first appearance of *We*, it still strikes us as an exciting work of art; and even though some readers may find its literary modernism a bit outdated—as modernism in general tends to seem these days—it serves the purpose of creating a perfect framework for Zamyatin's harrowing vision of the future.

Zamyatin's mastery in *We*, the extraordinary reach of his versatile talent, invites an infinite number of interpretations. A few ingenious ones—and a few more tedious than ingenious—are on display in *Zamyatin's We*, a collection of essays by American and European scholars.[2] Those readers who admire *We*, and who are curious about other people's opinions of the book, will find this collection of more than passing interest. While some of the articles feel rather dense (my favorite sentence: "R. D. Laing would term [D-503's psychological state] the fear of implosion by the ontologically insecure"), none of them has the feel of an extended tenure application or deconstructionist daydream.

For example, Richard Gregg gives an interesting textual analysis of *We* as a version of Genesis 1-4. (Ah, but for the ending . . .) Elsewhere, *We* is explored as a Jungian myth, not unlike Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*. Much attention is given to Zamyatin's use of yellow, and to his use of the eye as a major device of characterization. (This last theme reminded me of Julian Barnes's tongue-in-cheek analysis of the color of Emma Bovary's eyes—brown? black?—in *Flaubert's Parrot*.)

However pedantic some of this may sound, the attention to Zamyatin's stylistic methods in *Zamyatin's We* is perfectly justified. In his earlier provincial dramas, where his fictional reality could be traced to a "real" one, his modernist style was sometimes at odds with his incessant folkiness, as well as with his choice of subject matter. But in *We*, a fantasy, the form and the content come fully together; his "synthetism" conveys the frenetic tempo and shocking newness of his future world. As he wrote in his essay "On Literature, Revolution, and Entropy,"

> the old, slow, soporific descriptions are no more: laconicism—but every word supercharged, high voltage . . . syntax becomes elliptical, quick . . . . The image is sharp, synthetic, it contains only one basic feature, the kind you can catch from a moving automobile.

The art that arises out of modern reality, he added, must be "fantastic like a dream."

There is one aspect of Zamyatin's style in *We* that may strike the reader as odd, however, and it touches on a crucial question concerning the role of science in the book: long before D-503 is felled by Cupid's arrows, his manner of expression is distinctly uncharacteristic of a technocrat. He may be filled with adoration of the mathematical precision of the Single State, but his vision of the world is so metaphoric, so visually striking, as to sow the seeds of doubt in a skeptical reader:

> The sky [D-503 muses]: deserted, blue, ravished by a storm. Shadows form bristly angles, everything is cut out of blue autumn air, everything is fragile, you're terrified to touch it: it will instantly crack and disperse in a glass dust. And this is in me, too: mustn't think, don't don't think, otherwise—

A modern creative-writing purist might object: would an engineer talk like this? To make an inevitable comparison with *1984*, doesn't Winston sound much more like a "techie" than D-503? How does one account for this?

Well, for one thing, geniuses do not play by the rules. But also, while it is true that it is a rare Silicon Valley nerd who heeds the call of the Muse, Zamyatin's career precedes the blossoming of Creative Writing (although he did teach it): the chasm between the arts and sciences was not as

2 *Zamyatin's We: A collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Gary Kern; Ardis, 306 pages, $25.

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great in Zamyatin's time as it is today, and an engineer writing about, say, the "teeny baby suns on every belt buckle" was less likely to raise an eyebrow, especially in Russia, where the technical intelligentsia had traditionally looked beyond the laboratory walls. (Garin-Mikhailovsky, a moderately well-known novelist of the 1890s, was a geologist; Solzhenitsyn started by teaching physics, too.) In fact, until the debate over "physics vs. lyrics" in the 1960s, when budding Soviet technocrats rashly proclaimed the priority of nuclear physics over lyrical poetry, a Russian engineer was *assumed* to take an interest in things cultural.

The aesthetics of *We*, then, are not incompatible with the character of the scientist; but neither are they safe and secure in the novel's totalitarian, scientific state. The use of mathematical imagery in *We* is understandably extensive: the hero is an engineer, and the Single State bases its rule upon neat mathematical formulas. One must wonder, then: to what extent are they the cause of the nightmare world in the book? In one of the essays in *Zamyatin's We*, the English scholar Leighton Brett Cooke sets out to answer this question by showing that the mathematics of *We* constitute far more than a satire on the idea that the exact sciences are superior to the fine arts.

At first glance, Zamyatin mordantly mocks the domination of the humanities by science. State Post R-13 (whose "negroid" features are a light hint at Pushkin) composes a sonnet entitled "Happiness":

> Eternally enamored two-times-two,
> Eternally fused in a passionate four,
> The most passionate lovers in the world,
> The inseparable two-times-two . . .

> And on it went, about the wise, eternal happiness of the multiplication table [which is] wiser and more absolute than the ancient God; it never—do you understand?—never errs. And there are no happier numbers than those living according to the streamlined, eternal laws of the multiplication table. No hesitations, no deviations. Truth is one, and the way of truth is one; and this truth is two times two, and this way of truth is four. And would this not be absurd if these happily, ideally multiplicated twos started thinking about some freedom, i.e., clearly an error?

In *We*, happiness is security, and security is peace of mind, the absence of doubt. And what can provide for it better than the the soothing calmness of two-times-two? The multiplication table, Zamyatin seems to say, and the technological progress that stems from it, are threats to freedom.

But is that really his message? Surely Zamyatin, builder of icebreakers, was no Luddite. In his journalism, he used Einstein's theory of relativity as an argument for trashing nineteenth-century realism as outdated in the modern, four-dimensional world; he could hardly have made science a necessary accomplice in the suppression of freedom. A detailed analysis of *We* shows that the rulers of the Single State were familiar with only the most basic math, like the four rules of arithmetic and Euclidean geometry. By contrast, Zamyatin hints that the "Mefis" (Mr. Cooke misses out on the ironic *Mephis*topheles reference) are familiar with such advanced notions as imaginary and complex numbers, curve equations, and multiple unknowns. He also hints that the Single State is not so much ignorant of science beyond Pythagoras as it is determined to put a lid on it.

Mr. Cooke documents his case convincingly, and you don't need a Ph.D to enjoy it. Moreover, real-life parallels to the abuse of science by the powers that be are numerous, from Lysenko's short-lived triumph to the woes of modern Soviet scientists, who are prevented by the KGB from freely exchanging ideas with their Western counterparts.

Thus, it is not science itself but the uses to which science is put by a totalitarian state that is the issue in *We*. In this respect, Zamyatin's book differs markedly from the anti-utopia it so profoundly influenced, *1984*. In Orwell's book, two times two is not

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reliably four but rather whatever the Party says it is, four today and five tomorrow. Of course, Orwell's solidly satirical approach is well grounded in Soviet reality. The Party's sole motivation is indeed naked power—and nothing else. Zamyatin's eighteen-carat sarcasm goes further, however. His Single Party seeks to impose *happiness* on its subjects by means of a rigid, if limited, application of scientific principles.

There are other, related differences between the two books that are worth pausing over. One of the main themes of *1984*—some will say it is *the* theme—is the power of the Party's lie, the everyday lie that the Party imposes on its subjects. Zamyatin's Party, however, seems to play it straight: it delivers happiness—so long as you accept the infallibility and total importance of "two times two is four." The price tag is the closing of one's mind to all other possibilities. The horror of *1984* is not hard to comprehend. All you need to do is juxtapose two scenes: the smiling, applauding workers in a May Day parade on the one hand and the same workers being threatened with punishment if they do not attend the parade on the other. In *We*, the smiles are genuine, and that's the real horror.

Zamyatin was less interested in the exact nature of a political system (Orwell's great concern) than with the preservation of internal freedom at all costs. This concern put him at odds with many kinds of authority. The dangers of giving in to seduction, whether in the form of material prosperity or peace of mind; of relinquishing one's freedom of choice; of indulging in the sweet abandon of slavery; of seeking out a Benefactor who will make up your mind for you—these were Zamyatin's fears.

In another interesting article in *Zamyatin's We*, Kathleen Lewis and Harry Weber discuss the relationship between Zamyatin and the "proletarian poets" of the Twenties and Thirties in the Soviet Union. Gary Kern, the editor of the collection, remarks in his introduction that this essay is "especially valuable in that the proletarians are not read much anymore." (I assume he is referring to academe when he writes "not much" instead of "not at all.") The very title *We*, as E. J. Brown notes in another essay, is an ironic reference to the glorification of collectivism by the proletarian poets who constituted the so-called Proletkult, an embryo Ministry of Culture that was created in 1917.

The Proletkult—which sought to create a new, loyal literary cadre from the proletarian ranks—was a massive Creative Writing Program, Soviet style: if Lenin wrote that a dishwasher must have access to running the State, Gorky exhorted the same dishwasher to write proletarian odes. Some of the plot lines of *We*, in fact, are take-offs on *The Red Star*, whose author, Aleksandr Bogdanov, was the Proletkult's main theorist.

The proletarian poets were really an army of hacks who owed their artistic status to the regime. They licked the giving hand with such fervor and such ineptitude that even Trotsky complained: ". . . illiterate poems do not make proletarian poetry because they do not make poetry at all." Poets like Aleksei Gastev and others daily extolled the poetry of industrial labor in ardent metallurgical metaphors: "We are the smiths, our spirit is young/We forge the keys to happiness." These lines ended up as lyrics to a marching song that is still heard in the USSR on May Day.

Passage by passage, the Lewis and Weber article tracks down the numerous examples of how *We* parodies the exaltation over turbines and the swooning over flywheels. It leads one to speculate that it was not so much the politics of Zamyatin's book as his sarcastic attitude toward his colleagues that got him into trouble with them. But how could someone as richly endowed with a sense of humor as Zamyatin refrain from spoofing his grim, determined contemporaries? Especially since he was a professional himself. He noted in his *Auto-Interview* (1932) that the proletarian poets were "illiterate in respect to industrial technology . . . . More than once I have blushed for these authors when I read their dilettante sketches."

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Lewis and Weber confine themselves to literary analysis in their essay, but people do not become non-persons for their aesthetics alone, of course: there were important ideological issues at stake. In 1929, Proletkult was transformed into RAPP (the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) as part of the First Five-Year Plan, and the publication of *We* abroad gave the group its official *casus belli* against Zamyatin. The real name of the game was power: Zamyatin's continual jabbing at these servile hacks was a constant threat to their legitimacy. Add a Salieri-like envy, and the still very much alive inferiority complex that a Soviet author feels toward a colleague who has been published abroad, and you have all the elements for the kind of campaign against Zamyatin that was later replayed against Pasternak, Daniel, Sinyavsky. (With Solzhenitsyn, things got even more serious.) And, as if all this were not enough, Zamyatin was a lightning rod for others, with his leadership of the "Serapion Brothers." In short, a lesson needed to be taught—and so it was. Most of the members of the "Serapion Brothers"—Konstantin Fedin, Valentin Katayev, Veniamin Kaverin—buckled down and became respected members of the Writers' Union and award-winning spear-carriers for the Party.

Some of the attacks from the proletarians are reproduced in *Zamyatin's We*, and they are a riot if you appreciate political/cultural ironies (if you don't, you probably didn't enjoy *We* in the first place). In order to laugh, though, you must forget for a moment that this was no mere bickering in *The New York Review of Books*; rather, it was a question of survival. When confronted with Zamyatin's English satires, the Soviet critics took him to task, claiming that he failed to find the "other England," i.e., the working-class one. (Orwell did, later, but they didn't like him either. Quite demanding, the Soviets.) The best criticism of *We*: "straightforward, maliciously clear rationalistic piece of agitation" (Mikhailov). To a Soviet reader, this must sound like a five-star review.

Simply pointing the finger at the Party for these attacks, or even at Stalin, seems to me simplistic. Stalin and his cohorts had more urgent things on their minds at the time than looking for seditious parallels in satirical novels; thus, they delegated the purge of unacceptable writers to their trusted literary henchmen, who performed admirably. When Mayakovsky was writing as a proletarian poet—before his own fortunes took a tragic turn—he wished that "the pen could be made equal to the bayonet." Horrible things happen when metaphors are loosed from the printed page.

The literary influence of such Dostoevsky novels as *Notes from the Underground* and *The Possessed* on Zamyatin's work is obvious, but it was "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov* that influenced his philosophy. In that novel, freedom and earthly happiness are incompatible, and mankind is doomed to wrestle with the insoluble problem of existence. While implicitly accepting this notion, Zamyatin seems to conclude that happiness lies, rather, in *fighting* for freedom, i.e., in revolution. Narrowly interpreted, that made him, like many others, a comrade before the Revolution, an antagonist after.

At first Zamyatin's art (and inherent humanism) made him look away from the Revolution's "excesses," which were in fact its integral part. But later, when he acknowledged them, did he turn completely around? Here is one of the most famous excerpts from *We*. After I-330 describes to D-503 the Mephis' plot, he exclaims:

> "This is unthinkable! This is nonsense! Don't you understand that what you're planning is revolution!"
>
> "Yes it is. Why is it nonsense?"
>
> "Because a revolution can't be. Because ours—I say this, not you—our revolution was the last one. And no more revolutions are possible. Anyone knows that—"
>
> ". . . So name the last number for me."

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". . . I—I don't understand: what do you mean, the last?"

"The last, the highest, the greatest."

"But, I-330, this is nonsensical. If numbers are infinite, what kind of last one do you want?"

"But what kind of last revolution do you want? There's no last one; revolutions are infinite."

This passage is generally cited as proof of Zamyatin's protest against totalitarianism. No doubt. But what is the guarantee that the "Mephis" will lead mankind to freedom? To take I-330's words at face value, another revolution will be needed, and another. Interpreted ideologically, this prescription sounds rather close to Trotsky's "permanent revolution." Did Zamyatin the idealist see freedom as a horizon that no number of revolutions could bring us to? His artistic temperament seemed to need such cataclysms. Could his constant rebelliousness have been merely a refusal to grow up (a phenomenon well known to generations of American artists)? We'll never know.

In his unfinished novel, *The Scourge of God*, he draws a sympathetic image of Attila (granted, the Hun is only seventeen by the end)—another anarchic force. Through a number of parallels, Zamyatin seems to hint that the West shall be buried under the assault of the East. Whether this was a warning, we'll never know, either. The novel-fragment is written in highly traditional, excellent classical prose that smoothly incorporates the visual fireworks of his early "neo-realism." The artist seemed to calm down with age—not so the ideologue.

According to Mr. Kern, it is not Zamyatin's correct prediction of the details of the Marxist state—like *Pravda* ("the State Gazette") or the Iron Curtain ("the Green Wall")—that still prevents the publication of *We* in the USSR. It is "the ideological argument, the denial of a final revolution and a final truth, which is intolerable to the Soviet power." Were *We* to be published today, he writes, "it would hardly cause a mass revolution, but it might start a little revolution in the mind of each reader . . . . So long as it is banned, all talk of freedom of speech and thought in the USSR must be regarded as sham." Very true. But there is also every reason to believe that someone like Zamyatin would not fare well in the West, either, for very different reasons.

Zamyatin was an artist from head to toe. By definition, for him, an artist was a heretic, firmly in opposition to authority, be it the authority of political power or of the cultural establishment. I don't think he was opposed to popular success in principle (most likely he just didn't think about it), but his aesthetic convictions certainly would have made it hard for him to cash in on modern-day bestsellerdom. And could his loathing for compromise, his extraordinary lie-detecting capacity, his disposition to sarcasm and satire, make him popular with the grant committees, the Pulitzer juries, and the other trappings of American High Culture?

Zamyatin's fate in Stalin's Russia, had he stayed, is not in doubt; people with less backbone died by the millions. By contrast, opposing the establishment in the United States is the safest game in the world, resulting at worst in a lost contract or a denial of tenure. Here, Zamyatin would have lived a long, healthy life. Whether it would have been a happy one is hard to say.

But let us not get morbid. Let us imagine: Zamyatin was good at that. Let us imagine him following Faulkner and Fitzgerald to sunny Southern California; let us imagine him waking, in a Rip Van Winkle mode, after fifty years. He walks into a bookstore, and what does he see? Denis Johnson's *Fiskadoro*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and his compatriot Alexander Zinoviev's brilliant *The Yawning Heights*—all prime anti-utopias whose politics and aesthetics are widely diverse. He walks into Westwood; what's playing? *Blade Runner*, a flashy, pop-art vision of totalitarian L.A. in

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the twenty-first century, and *Brazil*, a flamboyant satire whose aesthetics are influenced more by MTV than by literature. Our hero turns on the TV, and what does he see? Rock videos abounding in anti-totalitarian imagery—robotlike masses and gigantic portraits of political leaders being smashed by long-haired rebels.

From a philosophical novel of 1920 to a political satire of 1948 to a rock video in 1988: the twentieth-century odyssey of a literary genre, and perhaps an inevitable one. High art does not have a monopoly on its own ideas, nor has popular culture ever needed a license to appropriate. Indeed, such vertical cross-pollination will always be with us, and only an Aldous Huxley would curl his lip at that.

The genre of anti-utopia, whatever its form, is an exercise in alertness, a reminder of terrible possibilities, and, as such, it too will always be with us. Also, its vision is not necessarily totally dark. Even *We* has a happy ending—of sorts. D-503's ex-girlfriend O-90, pregnant with his child, escapes beyond the Green Wall rather than subject herself to a "fantasectomy." Zamyatin's sarcasm had no limits. And yet, he remained an optimist.

Editor's note: We wish to call attention to the recent publication of three books by regular contributors to *The New Criterion*: Bruce Bawer's *Diminishing Fictions* (Graywolf Press, $18.50), a collection of essays on contemporary novelists and critics; Jed Perl's *Paris Without End* (North Point Press, $19.95), a study of French art since World War One; and Robert Richman's anthology of rhymed and metered verse, *The Direction of Poetry* (Houghton Mifflin, $19.95). Portions of all three books were published in *The New Criterion*.

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A fresh view of young Poussin

by Creighton Gilbert

Poussin (1594-1665) is one of the great artists who have never gained the love of a wide public, aside from limited periods and localities. The most common quick response offered by his admirers, as an enticing proof of his greatness, has been to cite the devotion Cézanne felt for him. Unfortunately, the aspect of Cézanne that derives from that devotion is not the impressionistic component, which people of course find easy to love, nor is it the part that reflects, perhaps involuntarily, the stress of trying to get his vision down on canvas, which has been a great if almost underground force in Cézanne's canonization by so many twentieth-century artists. Instead it is the classical orderliness and clarified exposition which Cézanne was so concerned to try to entwine with Impressionism, as a necessary assistance to its truth. And classical order by itself, which thus seems to be what's left for Poussin, does not have wide popular appeal. The French educational system, which was long able to assign it chauvinistic value as an achievement said to be possible only in French culture, at least gave Poussin a great deal of exposure, like Racine. The unending performances of the latter's tragedies at the Comédie Française have their analogue in the long rows of Poussins in the best spots in the Louvre, even if both are equally overlooked by most foreign visitors, who are not likely in most cases even to register their existence. Yet while many people in France and elsewhere no doubt think of Poussin as a boring requirement, his marvelous work has in this way remained not only of unusually easy access but in great quantity—a rare boon to the loving specialists.

It is thus not at all surprising that there has never been a one-man show for Poussin in the United States until now, and that the present one—"Poussin: The Early Years in Rome; the Origins of French Classicism"—has neither been treated as a blockbuster nor travelled around. To the contrary, it has only been shown by one museum, the Kimbell Art Museum, whose location in Forth Worth is not exactly on the main routes of cultural tourists. But it has benefited from innovative kinds of commitment from immensely skilled professionals who are quite clear in their minds about the artist's greatness, and their scholarly skills have fed into the exhibition in a number of ways.[1]

We can tell that this is an uncompromising display as specialists would wish it, from its concentration on just one part of the artist's career, about eight years from the beginning of it. That career continued for some thirty-five more years. They begin just as the obscure thirty-year-old painter was getting set for his decisive migration from

1 "Poussin: The Early Years in Rome" was on view at the Kimbell Art Museum in Forth Worth, Texas, from September 24 to November 27.

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a then-insignificant Paris to Rome, the goal of all ambitious artists at the time. (He would come to be one of its leading figures himself, going from strength to strength.) It also has more drawings in it than paintings, though one should quickly add that the thirty-five paintings are obviously plenty to show off Poussin's work during those eight years, and to study his range and development. A different major element in the effectiveness of the exhibition comes from the way in which the museum's director, Edmund Pillsbury, is quite validly able to offer it to his local public simply as one more presentation of rare and indubitable masterpieces. That it is "made for academic specialists" is neither a curse nor a block to doing it, as is so often presumed.

The most surprising special feature of all is the catalogue, and the circumstances that generated both it and the exhibition.[2] Externally it looks like those common today for ambitious exhibitions, and could be marketed on that basis without cheating. But it is really not a catalogue at all; rather, it is a book about the young Poussin. It was entirely written (but not yet published) before the exhibition was even contemplated and includes hypotheses of a revisionist kind as to how the artist emerged in the early years. The hypotheses primarily take the form of large numbers of individual attributions of the sort that connoisseurs traditionally present, rather than an all-over picture of a personality. At least, that is how they emerged for the viewers, though the author certainly had some overarching formulations in mind. The book illustrates, in small black-and-white pictures, all the two hundred and eighty paintings and drawings claimed by the author as being works of Poussin in those years, and offers a selection of key works also in larger format, sometimes in color. This selection is quite unaffected by whether or not a particular work is in the exhibition.

The author of *Poussin: the Early Years in Rome,* Konrad Oberhuber, is of high repute as a scholar of the drawings of Raphael and has been primarily a museum curator, at the National Gallery in Washington and the Albertina in Vienna; but he developed this study of Poussin mainly during some years while he was teaching at Harvard, with involvement of students. The Kimbell Museum then simply set about borrowing a portion of the works discussed in the book, with the usual restrictions as to its own space, what people would lend, and what would or would not offer a balanced view. The exhibition thus shows us the young Poussin in the personal view of Oberhuber. Previously the actual number of works agreed upon as being by Poussin in his youth was very much smaller, hardly adding up to a general image. Of course Oberhuber's attributions are different in important ways from what anybody has suggested before, and are sure to be eventually treated, to some extent, as misguided. But first they will be discussed to see what can be accepted; the main matter is the ratio of acceptance.

This exhibition "catalogue," if one may call it that with quotation marks, turns out to have steered clear of the pitfalls of ordinary ones, in ways that should fascinate even museums that concentrate on blockbusters. For one thing, it avoided the schedule deadlines that make catalogues the product of nervous last drafts and the breeding grounds of factual errors; more important, it avoided the skewing of critical judgments toward the arbitrary portion of the works that could be borrowed. Its success might suggest the interesting, if breathtaking, reform of just dropping the hassle of creating exhibition catalogues and instead simply providing visitors with a recent book on the subject. Yet one may doubt that such an unconventional, if reasonable, procedure will be often followed, however happily it might alter the daily lives of museum staffs and despite the very great prestige in museum

2 *Poussin: The Early Years in Rome; the Origins of French Classicism,* by Konrad Oberhuber, with a foreword by Edmund P. Pillsbury; Hudson Hills Press, 367 pages, $65.

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circles of the two men who produced the Poussin exhibition.[3]

Along with Pillsbury and Oberhuber, the person who is due major credit for the show's attractive result is the architect of the Kimbell Museum, the late Louis Kahn. Just as Pillsbury took Oberhuber's book as a base and worked its materials into an exhibition, he did the same thing with Kahn's spaces. The area consists of three parallel halls, each a hundred feet long. The outer two are each twenty feet wide. During the exhibition, partial screens divided both of these into what became several twenty-foot-wide rooms. This is a happy scale for Poussin's paintings, which were all made for people's houses, if for ones a bit more spacious than average. Many museum galleries, built to make us feel like visitors to a royal palace, leave Poussins afloat in vast voids, but not the Kimbell. Its middle hall—only ten feet wide, with less light—was given over to the drawings, hung close, on more than one level. It had many exits onto the larger side galleries, thus setting up repeated suggestions to compare the drawings with relevant paintings.

Many of the works in the show have always been known as major works by Poussin; thus, they provide visitors both with a satisfying sense of what the artist definitely did and with tests for Oberhuber's new proposals. Such pedestals for new speculations about attributions, grand stabilizers for thinking about them, are provided in particular by two paintings, masterpieces acquired decades ago by knowledgeable American museums. One of them, the *Death of Germanicus* (from Detroit), serves all by itself, as much as any one painting could, to show off the standard notion of the classical Poussin, and how inadequate that notion is. It hung for centuries in Rome, in the great house of its original patron's family, and was an object of pilgrimage for foreign artists coming to the city. It is not surprising to find in it the model for motifs used by one of the most classical-minded of such visitors, the later French master Jacques-Louis David.

Poussin's picture, in accord with the basic vocabulary of the Renaissance, focuses on narrating the intense interrelationships of a small group at a climactic moment. The death scene of the heir of Augustus is thus mainly about people saying goodbye. The one dying is not the most prominent; a series of his friends arrive in a kind of parade, each very individual in type and gesture, forming a frieze of verticals that takes more than half the front plane. The more removed figure of Germanicus in his bed takes the lesser half. The human variables of the moving figures, overcome, unbelieving, vowing to help, are the more affecting for being played out against the hard brown geometry of the architecture. Poussin often tells us that painfully strong feeling finds release in ritual forms. As one of the speakers at the opening of the exhibition aptly remarked, Poussin's severe classicism does not (as is sometimes supposed) suppress feeling, but compresses it.

If this masterpiece (well chosen for the card of invitation to the exhibition) keeps us from forgetting the standard tag about Poussin being a classicist, then a second one, from Boston (rightly chosen for the catalogue cover), makes us stretch it, letting us continue to call him a classicist only with a good deal of fudging. Its theme of eroticism also introduces us to the chief concern of the lesser known works which the exhibition seeks to add to our view of the artist's oeuvre. It shows the mythical story of the moon goddess, Diana or

3 My "impractical" notion might be instantly rebutted by the (obvious) point that on many themes of exhibitions there is no good recent book. But a bit of flexibility or imagination could surmount that problem. A museum could commission such a book, rather than a catalogue, at the moment it begins to plan an exhibition on a given theme. Or in choosing what theme to treat in an exhibition, it could give preference to one that was the subject of a recent book, or, still better, a book in the late stages of being written.

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Selene, and the mortal shepherd Endymion; like the whole culture of his century, Poussin regularly approached the great issues of life by way of established myths, which both it and he were quite ready to modify in inventive ways. (A culture like ours, which has forgotten most of its mythical lore, tends wrongly to suppose that Poussin was merely making large illustrations of odd bits out of classical literature.)

Selene in her nightly journeys has noticed the shepherd and fallen in love with him; as the sun rises, freeing her from work, she comes down to earth and appears right in front of him. The painting gives almost equal weight to two different kinds of things. One is the constancy of nature, as time brings sunrise again. This is typically shown by means of human figures. The sun god Apollo, in his chariot above, is revealed to us by an allegorical figure, perhaps Dawn, who pulls a curtain aside at the right. As always in Poussin, she is no neutral chorus member, but an actor with a strong if short role. On the other side of the canvas we find the second focus of the painting, where the shepherd kneels to the incredible appearance of the goddess before him. Her face is a mask of an ideally beautiful type from classical sculpture, and so too her body and limbs present smooth ideal forms. But her stance speaks of her dramatic will, as she pushes her belly out in front of his startled raised arms. The classic smoothness of her body allows this eroticism to be ignored, if one prefers.

The myth had certainly begun as a male fantasy of erotic success, and in Poussin's culture it is still of course the male figure who is the individual having the experience. The particularity of Endymion's state of mind at this instant, dazzled, awed, adoring, melting in acceptance, is offered with a unique richness of visual report, at the center point of the painting. What we cannot understand unless we know the myth (and what Oberhuber's account also does not stop to tell us) is that Endymion's looking like this is all the more plausible because Selene has just waked him from a sound sleep. Earlier artists had generally painted the story (never so memorably) with a sleeping shepherd on the grass, the goddess or the moon itself looking down from above, or embracing his inert body. The most widely circulated literary version, a mocking erotic comedy by Lucian, presents Diana telling how she was smitten and came down to where he was sleeping, then suddenly ends with the words: "what happened next you can guess." Poussin, moving from this cue, has invented the next moment, while totally faithful to the story that tradition gave him.

A large number of the pictures that Oberhuber proposes to add in his reconstruction of the artist's early years are similarly erotic. Most of them are more directly so and are also smaller and simpler, often too with a different and rougher paint quality. The argument, not an unreasonable one, is that the as yet unsuccessful artist produced them rapidly for cheap sale. Most of them have been labeled as Poussin at one time or another but then rejected; Oberhuber primarily sifted through these old suggestions, some close to the artist's own time.

A notable instance shows a satyr, his mixed human and goat features emphasized, pulling a sheet off a nude sleeping nymph and staring as he leans closely over her. In the period this would have been near pornography, since sexuality was implied in the female by nudity, in the male by the satyr, according to an obviously male-oriented social standard. The Endymion picture, with its shepherd and fully clothed Diana, is not at all pornographic. Poussin gives the satyr picture high vitality, but also turns it into a poetic lyric, with the blue shadows of a forest opening. He was surely thinking of erotic lyrics like those of Catullus.

One of these early paintings, larger and more finished, is a Venus and Adonis bought by Pillsbury for the Kimbell Museum a few years ago. It can be taken for granted that this purchase was the original

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stimulus to the exhibition; the desire was to justify a purchase that some serious scholars had said was not a Poussin. The effect of such a large effort built on that kind of foundation can be distasteful when it reveals the purchaser as one of an all too common type, the fanatical, self-deceived collector of alleged masterpieces. Such an effort is more likely to be made when the work is one of several versions of the same composition, with competing claims to be the artist's original, as here. Yet, if the attempt proves out—after all the comparable undoubted and debatable Poussins have been borrowed and hung side by side—then it shows that the purchaser was properly ready to extend himself fully, to back up his claims in the most scholarly process possible. It is one of the best reasons for such exhibitions and is persuasive to other owners who are asked to lend their treasures.

Few individual, arguable, expensive buys of Old Master paintings have been accompanied by such a full-scale process of evaluation as this one. It included taking on the publication of Oberhuber's book, written without the intention of its being an exhibition catalogue at all. At the time of the opening, the process was enhanced by a symposium, a two-day affair with speeches by ten outside scholars. It was typical that this was not only an element in the specialist tone of the exhibition but was also seamlessly blended with the gala champagne reception for the museum's patrons.

The talks were of limited usefulness, as is generally the case at learned meetings. The speakers had to prepare before seeing the exhibition, and could only respond to the book by making last-minute revisions. It was different, though, in the conversations that went on in the intermissions and on the next day in the galleries. The animation of debate was a marvel, a striking tribute to the aptness of the arrangements that produced it. Ordinarily a set of proposals like Oberhuber's would take years to filter among these people, and then thinly and solemnly. Here there was the hothouse of judging that is apparently more common in science meetings convened to explore a new hypothesis. It was widely agreed that Oberhuber had made a good case for the attributions of the paintings. Pierre Rosenberg, the eminent curator at the Louvre, was willing to say he was in ninety-percent agreement, and other comments were similar. A major qualification was that, although the identification of these works as early Poussins worked, the dates were another matter. A series of speakers gave independent reasons for thinking that several works had been done some five years later than Oberhuber's scheme would have it. More refined arguments will certainly emerge.

There was much less agreement about the attributions of the drawings. This might seem surprising, since they were Oberhuber's starting point and drawings are his specialty. However, it is an axiom that such questions are harder to answer about drawings than about paintings, for numerous reasons. Just one is that the originals are less often seen, since they are found not on museum walls that many people view at random times but in boxes that one must ask permission to open. Almost every one of these Poussin drawings seems to be made with a different colored ink, with a stroke of different thickness, or a different dilution of the areas of wash. All of them, or almost, are very good drawings, one of the tests of an outstanding connoisseur, as Oberhuber is. Perhaps they show very fast development in the artist, changing technically by the month, but that is not usual, nor usually offered in such hypotheses about the reconstruction of an artist's early work on the basis of attributions.

When the connoisseur makes the attribution, it is typical that his analysis emphasizes the artist's procedures, only rarely the ultimate function of the drawing. In Poussin's case this function was storytelling, a narrative about people in a situation, just as in the paintings. That this was his main concern is confirmed by the fact that almost all the drawings are of whole

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compositions. The results are often marvelous, in this artist whom one might call a choreographer of storytelling ballets (except that the body poses are not at all stylized) or a combination of Shakespeare and a stage director.

A wash drawing of Theseus abandoning Ariadne is a great small example. Ariadne, sprawled nude on her bed, front and center, is an image of both desperation and the attractiveness that Theseus had earlier found in her. He moves off to the back at the side, but turns to look; his body swings around, but its main thrust is away, while she falls backward away from him. A centrifugal tension pulls these two falling oblique forms farther apart still, in the pattern of an opening fan. The only stable form, and the only vertical one, is the statue in the center, perhaps the household god Hermes or perhaps Priapus. This perfectly compact geometry with cutting lines, overlaid with chiaroscuro blots, which are marks of fierce irregular energies, is assigned by Oberhuber to 1626, near the start of his schema for the artist's steady growth. Can we then believe that other, less realized, compositions came after? When the varying answers to such questions are presented, as they are sure soon to be, our understanding of Poussin can only benefit.

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Two poems *by W. S. Di Piero*

Author's Note: These poems take as their inspiration Leopardi's "A Se Stesso" and "A Silvia." However, I am reluctant to refer to them as translations or adaptations. Although they were occasioned by Leopardi's poems, they are very much the product of my own preoccupations.

Leopardi's *"A Se Stesso"*

Heartsick, settled for good, now finally
you know something: what you thought would last
is gone, one more last false thing. Lost, shattered again,
not just the hope you've always felt
but the desire, too,
that semblance own your heart. Settled now
for good. You toiled. What's worth
your rage and will and trouble?
No world is worth
so much grief. Life galls
and bleeds us. What's left? The world, our slime.
So stop now, rest, give it up
one last time. Our species has one end—
we die. Nothing more. Nature, brute force,
prevails, in hiding, and makes the world
a common grave and all things
an inexpressible emptiness.

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Leopardi's *"A Silvia"*

Do you still remember the time
you spent with us?
Giddy, amazed
on the brink of girlhood,
laughter brimmed your eyes
with shy, green promise.

In sweet May,
you drifted through the mornings
at your work. The hushed rooms
and neighborhood streets
quivered with your songs,
one after another, their lilt
a slackened line cast toward your future.

I'd lift my nose
from the mess of books and pages
that burnt out the best part of me
when I was young,
and listen, up here on my balcony,
for your voice and that sure hand
clicking at the loom.
I stared at the blue blue sky,
the sun-glazed streets, the little gardens,
the sea so far beyond these mountains.
Words, too much merely ours,
can't tell what I felt.

All the nice things:
dreams, hope, a heart renewed . . .
Dear girl, life and fate
seemed so good then.
Now memory of that imagination
tastes bitter and makes me see again
how so much went wrong.
Nature hammers us, her children,
with sober promises
unmade or betrayed.

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Before winter sucked life
from grass already sick, half-gone
with blight we could not even see,
you, keen child, were lost. The years
never greened long and lush in you.
You never got to wince and blush
at praise for your thick dark hair,
or learn to look at boys
by looking down, away, or trade whispers
with girlfriends coming home from church.

I'm one of the lost, too.
I was the child who died
to myself. It never belonged to me.
The best hope I might have lived into
is gone now. Is this
that world? The same pleasures,
love, work, troubles
we talked about together?
Is this what we are all meant for?
A suffering thing . . . when the fact
showed itself, you disappeared,
whispering about the stone and covered ditch
from your grand distance.

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Music

The Harvard Cage

by Samuel Lipman

It wasn't, perhaps, a very fine day to be at Harvard for the first of the six prestigious Charles Eliot Norton Lectures to be given in the current academic year by John Cage, America's foremost avant-garde . . . well, shall we say, influence? Outside, as befits the middle of October in New England, the weather was grey and cold, with a fresh wind blowing. Inside, I found myself standing in gloomy Memorial Hall, waiting for the inner doors to open on Sanders Theatre, where Mr. Cage was to . . . well, shall we say, perform? Perhaps I should not stress the gloom, for the walls of Memorial Hall are also deeply moving, emblazoned as they are with plaques commemorating, by name, birthdate, college major, and battlefield, the Harvard dead in the Civil War, certainly the last of America's wars still considered totally acceptable in today's best schools. With a half hour still to go, and the doors to Sanders not yet open, people began to gather. Here and there I spotted a well-known contemporary musical figure, costumed in what might be termed intellectual motorcycle garb; elsewhere, as one might have expected, the crowd seemed to be made up of faculty and students, almost all dressed *à la mode*—the men tieless and the women bejeaned—in unobtrusively clean (this was, after all, Harvard) but demonstrably ratty clothes.

As the crowd began to press more closely together, conversations became easier to overhear. My own favorite took place between what I took to be an aging male graduate student and a mature bluestocking lady. "I've heard," the aspiring scholar began after a few pleasantries, "that Nabokov has made a really wonderful translation of *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian. I want to get someone to help me with it, so I can mistranslate it." "Into what language?" approvingly asked the bluestocking. "Into Russian, of course," he shot back.

The note of nonsense so dear to the wily Cage had thus been well struck, and had I not been familiar for many years with photographs of the avant-garde hero's elfin and gleeful face I would have been certain that here, without benefit of ceremony, the lecture had already begun. But as it turned out, after the doors opened and we all noisily filed in, there was to be a kind of ceremony before Mr. Cage was to join his illustrious predecessors in making the personal statement of musical faith for which the series has become famous.

Among those predecessors have been such major twentieth-century composers as Igor Stravinsky (1939-40), Paul Hindemith (1949-50), Aaron Copland (1951-52), Carlos Chavez (1958-59), Roger Sessions (1968-69), and Leonard Bernstein (1972-73). It must be said, too, that outside music the list of Norton lecturers has been equally distinguished, including T. S. Eliot (1932-33), Robert Frost (1936-37), Erwin Panofsky (1947-48), E. E. Cummings (1952-53), Jorge Luis Borges (1967-

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68), and Lionel Trilling (1969-70).[1]

Indeed, it was in the introduction to Mr. Cage—more about which in a moment—that an innocent onlooker would have found his only intimation of the great academic world which only yesterday had provided the soil not just for the Norton lectures but for the man in whose honor they were named. Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), Dante scholar, bibliographer of Michelangelo, biographer of Kipling, and editor of the poems of Donne and the letters of Carlyle, was the first Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard (1873-98). He was also the close personal and intellectual friend of Emerson, Whittier, and Lowell on this side of the Atlantic, and of Carlyle and (especially) Ruskin in England. In *Praeterita* (1885-89), Ruskin called Norton, his junior by eight years, "my first real tutor"; the Ruskin-Norton correspondence, recently republished (1987) in an expanded form by Cambridge University Press, sheds much light on the human ties underlying the high-Victorian transatlantic republic of letters that dominated Anglo-American cultural life until World War I.

Although Norton's life was spent with literature and the visual arts, he was a music lover, and there was much music activity at Harvard in his time, as there has been ever since. Even a cursory glance at the past hundred years makes clear just how much musical composition and thought has taken place in and around Cambridge. The very Sanders Theatre where John Cage was to speak saw in 1871 the first performance of Harvard professor John Knowles Paine's noble incidental music for a production (in the original Greek) of *Oedipus tyrannus*; along with his *Mass* (1865), Paine's Prelude to the Sophocles play is widely recognized today as the earliest American music to have achieved a solid place in the classical repertory.[2] Before and after World War I, the Harvard faculty was the home of the gifted but now forgotten American composer Edward Burlingame Hill.[3] In the 1920s, Harvard students included Walter Piston, Virgil Thomson, and Elliott Carter, and in the 1930s Leonard Bernstein, Harold Shapero, and the sadly short-lived Irving Fine. The greatly gifted and now vastly underrated Piston taught at Harvard from 1926 to 1960, and served for a time as chairman of the music department.[4]

And so what was now required for Mr. Cage to make his debut as a member of the

1 In the terms of Charles Chauncey Stillman's 1925 gift establishing the lectures, music constituted one of the disciplines to be discussed. Stillman also stipulated that the Norton lectures be published by the Harvard University Press. Accordingly, Stravinsky's lectures are to be found in *Poetics of Music* (1947), Hindemith's in *A Composer's World* (1952), Copland's in *Music and Imagination* (1952), Chavez's in *Musical Thoughts* (1960), Sessions's in *Questions about Music* (1970), and Bernstein's in *The Unanswered Question* (1976).

2 Fortunately—and given our attitude toward our musical past, surprisingly—this music can be heard on records. The Overture to *Oedipus tyrranus* is available on Angel DS-49263 in an inadequate performance conducted by Kenneth Klein and played by the London Symphony Orchestra. The *Mass* is available on New World 262/3 in an excellent performance by Gunther Schuller and the St. Louis Symphony.

3 Hill's attractive Sextet for Wind Instruments and Piano, a typically French-influenced work, was available for many years in Columbia's Modern American Music Series on CBS AML 4846.

4 Harold Shapero, once hailed as the coming American Beethoven, is just now beginning to re-emerge as a composer to be taken seriously. One hopes a by-product of his new reputation will be fresh recordings of some of his major works. A recording of several of Irving Fine's typically lyrical compositions, including the *Notturno* for strings and harp and the String Quartet, has just been issued on Elektra/Nonesuch 9 79175-1; a beautiful recording of the lovely *Serious Song*, performed by Gerard Schwarz and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, is available on Elektra/Nonesuch D-79002. Among the currently available Walter Piston records is a complete set of his five marvelous string quartets, well played by the Portland String Quartet on Northeast 216, 214, and 208.

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Harvard faculty was a proper academic introduction. This honor fell to Reinhold Brinkmann, Director of Graduate Studies and Professor of Music at Harvard. Dressed in an old-fashioned but reassuring jacket and tie and speaking with a scholarly German accent, Professor Brinkmann addressed the audience in a way both jolly and unctuous. He began by describing Mr. Cage's extraordinary contributions to what he so fashionably called "world music"; this phrase, which is to be distinguished from "world musics," an up-scale euphemism for what was formerly seen as folk and ethnic art, is used today to identify sounds based on widely disparate rhythmic, harmonic, and procedural elements of, among others, Indian, Tibetan, Japanese, and African music. The result is a "cutting-edge" effort beyond the supposedly narrow prejudices of nations and civilized traditions. After many further jovial compliments and tributes, Mr. Brinkmann ended by telling how he had only discovered that day that the phenomenon of John Cage had been anticipated many years ago. According to Professor Brinkmann, he had just come from playing for his class (on the piano) the ending of Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, where he found that the closing *pianississimo* chord contained just the notes C, G, E, and A, which, when properly arranged, spelled CAGE!

The rostrum—actually a shabby folding table—was now Mr. Cage's. His first words, delivered in his usual soothing monotone, set the stage for the remaining ninety minutes, as he described the unfolding of his compositional career over these many years. At first, what he had to say had the great advantage, increasingly lost as the time wore on, of perfect clarity, save for his tendency to garble an occasional word:

> It was here at Harvard, not quite forty years ago, that I went into an anechoic chamber, not expecting in that silent [word indistinct] to hear two sounds, one high, my nervous system in operation, one low, my blood in circulation. The reason I did not expect to hear these two sounds was that they were set into vibration without any intention on my part. That experience gave my life direction, the exploration of economic tension. No one else is true to that. I will do it for us. I did not know immediately what I was doing, nor after all these years have I found much [word indistinct]. I compose music, yes, but how? I gave up making choices; in their place I put the asking of questions. The answers come from the mechanism of the *I Ching*, the most ancient of all books. Tossing three coins six times, yielding numbers from 21 to 64. Something like that occurs for each person as he is conceived.

Now, for what seemed like an eternity but what turned out to be less than one third of his whole presentation, Mr. Cage described in detail how he assembled the text of his Norton lectures, all of them, he was quite frank, made up of the same material. He started, he said, by taking 487 disparate quotations, selected via chance operations from such sources as Ludwig Wittgenstein ("I have long been attracted to his work," Cage said, "reading it with enjoyment, but very little understanding"), Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, Thoreau, and Emerson; he couldn't stomach Emerson, he told us, so he ended up with only five usable excerpts from the sage of Concord. To these passages were added excerpts, mostly on international events, from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

All this material, Mr. Cage told us, was subjected to an immense amount of computer-aided manipulation that was partially directed, partially determined by chance. (He was, I might add, gracious in giving credit to his programmers and helpers.) The final selection of the bits that made up his lecture he determined according to what pleased him. The result, he proposed, bore some similarity to astronomer Fred Hoyle's steady-state cosmology, with its suggestion of ever-changing unchangeability. Although scien-

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tifically Hoyle seems to be out of fashion these days, Cage's metaphorical use of his theory—which, one must assume, started out as a serious scientific investigation—had the effect of placing Hoyle alongside Fuller and McLuhan as a prime avatar of the contemporary irrationalist sensibility.

But all good things—by good I mean, in this case, the relative clarity of Cage's introduction—must come to an end. By now, almost forty-five minutes in, it was time for the lecture proper to begin.[5] It was, I must say, a salad composed of sentences that parsed but did not mean anything, and of recognizable phrases—most recognizable when they bore some sign of their origins in newspaper stories—abutted to other equally recognizable but totally unrelated phrases. Mr. Cage has often told us of his reverence for *Finnegans Wake*. It will be recalled that Joyce's meaning, embedded in an apparent stream of consciousness, was multi-layered, perhaps beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. But whatever the merits of that idiosyncratic excursion beyond rational storytelling and argument, the wit so omnipresent in Joyce finds no parallel whatsoever in Mr. Cage's contrived happenstances.

Mr. Cage's delivery was a fitting accompaniment to his content. Although Mr. Cage has an avid interest in mushrooms—he is a learned, and evidently brave, mycologist—his presentation was closer to that of a beekeeper. His voice droned on and on. He tended to start each sentence or fragment strongly, and then fade away at the end. Many words he dropped almost completely, whether from design or a desire to appear "poetic," or perhaps simply from fatigue, I don't know. But always he plowed doggedly ahead, letting the listener find his own meanings, if at all, by default.

As time passed, many members of the audience began to doze, and others started to leave. At first, the exodus was limited to the upstairs gallery, where the early trickle of emigrants threatened to turn at times into a steady stream. Then the itch to breathe fresh air affected the downstairs crowd, who as the first to arrive could be presumed to have been the most eager to come. In my own row—the third, almost in the center—the three people who were next to me got up together and walked out. The young man who'd been sitting between them and me immediately stretched out, his tape recorder still running, lay across the seats they had just vacated, and immediately fell asleep.

I stayed awake—covering John Cage for *The New Criterion* is, after all, a responsible task—and was thus privileged to hear, just as the afternoon came to an end, the glimmerings of some sense in the midst of the randomness. For seasoned Cage watchers, I quote these rare, and rarely gratifying, snippets:

> Test fire could become a theater for the deployment of AIDS.
>
> A theater for the deployment of gas.
>
> Israel could become a theater for the deployment of gas.
>
> Washington will pay to buy a 20% stake in the Palestinian uprising.
>
> Feelings Washington will pay to buy.

All honor, I suppose, to the *I Ching* for its arrival, through chance operations, at a fashionable *Weltanschauung*, though it is curious that its political position seems to have been formed in the world of American

5 I was reminded, in the context of Mr. Cage's preliminary lecture to his lecture, of my friend Lionel Abel's witty story about an evening in a Parisian cultural *salon* in the early 1950s, where the offering was to be a performance of a late—and very difficult—twelve-tone work by Arnold Schoenberg and a lecture by the then chic theorist and conductor René Leibowitz explaining what had just been played. When the Schoenberg piece was over, Lionel went up to Leibowitz and asked, "Now that we've heard the lecture, where's the music?"

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avant-garde social radicalism rather than in the more passive climes of Chinese philosophy. Or perhaps Mr. Cage has been so indefatigable in setting his computers to work churning out material that, like the monkeys at typewriters who eventually end up producing exact copies of all the great works of literature, he has indeed proven that even rank nonsense contains within it the simulacrum of sense.

Whether sense or nonsense, Mr. Cage's coda—if I may be allowed the use of a musical term to describe this non-musical subject—left a distinctly bitter taste in the mouth. Elfin smiles all too easily seem like nasty leers when they accompany provocations, and finally this first Charles Eliot Norton lecture of John Cage, despite all the brightness and charm of its deliverer, formed yet another chapter in the long line of Cage provocations, stretching back even before his notorious *4'33"*, the totally silent piano composition of 1952, at least to his 1939 *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* for two variable-speed phonograph turntables playing frequency recordings along with muted piano and cymbal.

But it would be a mistake to think that Mr. Cage's primary provocation on this October afternoon was musical, or even political. Indeterminacy and incomprehensibility, after all, are old hat in the avant-garde. What passes today for the cutting edge of music—the various elephantine minimalisms of Glass, Reich, and Adams, for example—is thoroughly, perhaps even over-thoroughly, planned and notated; comprehensibility, and what is even more, likeability, is the widely proclaimed goal of every composer with a claim to being chic. Similarly, Mr. Cage's closing foray into *Village Voice* politics only underscored how little real social thought has gone on in the avant-garde in recent decades.

Mr. Cage's provocation was, I think it is fair to say, directed at his host. The host he had in mind was not so much the Harvard of today, swollen as it is by pride and riches and confused as to its educational mission, its mind more on Wall Street and Hollywood than Athens and Rome; the new Harvard, at least in the person of Cage's introducer Professor Brinkmann and those docile folk in the audience who stayed on to the bitter and boring end, has room for everything under the sun, and for nothing. What was under attack was rather the historical Harvard, the great university of Charles Eliot Norton and so many past Norton lecturers, of the noble pieties of Memorial Hall and Sanders Theatre, of such Harvard presidents as Charles W. Eliot and James Bryant Conant, of the numberless scholars and teachers who have labored to bring an ordered and rational civilization to our always new country.

When Mr. Cage finished, and after the applause had died down, I turned to the people behind me and said, "The whole world's gone mad." No one chose to disagree with me, or to censure my impertinence on a sacred occasion. Instead they just looked at me with open-mouthed stares. Along with everyone else, I went out into the cold night. Where is Charles Eliot Norton, now that we need him?

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Art

Between two worlds: the art of David Bomberg

by Eric Gibson

Henry Moore excepted, the English have always had an uncomfortable relationship with their modern artists. While they're alive they try to ignore them, and after their deaths they discover them, often bestowing appreciation out of all proportion to their gifts. Of course, England isn't alone in its hostility to its artists. But at the beginning of the modern movement, it was the only country to create an atmosphere so uncongenial that it actually drove some artists into exile. The most famous cases are Walter Sickert, who lived in France for seven years from 1896, and, thirty years later, David Bomberg.

Bomberg's career (he was born in 1890 and died in 1957) was one of the strangest and most tragic in the history of British modernism. He made an auspicious beginning when, in his early twenties, he painted a number of ambitious pictures in a highly personal, Cubist-Futurist style. *In the Hold* (1913-14), a dockland scene, and *The Mud Bath* (1914), whose subject is a London health spa, are the most famous of these. He had met Wyndham Lewis shortly before and was to become loosely associated with the Vorticist movement, Lewis's version of the Futurism of Marinetti and Boccioni. But after the war Bomberg all but disappeared from view, becoming so marginal a presence in the contemporary British art scene that in 1949 Lewis, by then an art critic for *The Listener*, was prompted to write: "What happened to Bomberg after 1920? . . . He ought to be one of the half-dozen most prominent artists in England."

The explanation is to be found in both Bomberg's art and the artistic climate in England at the time. It was Bomberg's misfortune to live at a time when success—which really meant earning a living from one's work—depended as much on securing the attention of influential writers as it did on raw talent. One of these, Herbert Read, favorably reviewed a Bomberg exhibition in 1919 but was never moved to champion the artist as he did others. Bomberg even missed out on the one opportunity that might have made a difference: regular commissions from the War Artists' Advisory Committee, formed in 1939 to pay artists to record the war at home. A single insignificant commission was all he received, for which only the preparatory sketches were finally accepted. One consequence of the Committee's work was that it ingratiated Britain's modern artists with the public by showing the "radicals" capable of evoking common, everyday experience. It helped transform Henry Moore from a little-known abstract sculptor in mid-career doldrums into the cynosure of postwar British art. Having been all but excluded from it, Bomberg could hope for no such stunning metamorphosis himself.

In his art, he fared no better. Firsthand experience in the trenches in World War I had turned Bomberg against the machine aesthetic that had informed his prewar

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painting. He came to believe instead that man's fate was more closely tied to a rapprochement with nature. Accordingly, his subject matter changed from pulsing scenes of contemporary urban life to landscapes and, occasionally, portraits; at the same time he abandoned his version of Cubism-Futurism for a highly gestural figurative expressionism. But the new Bomberg failed to win many admirers in England. This was particularly true during the Thirties, when the dominant avant-garde styles drew on European Surrealism and geometric abstraction.

For reasons of economics and morale, Bomberg found himself spending more and more time abroad—a total of almost a decade by the time he died. This gradual emigration turned out to be a professional disaster. When he died in 1957, virtually an artistic nonentity, fifteen years had passed since his last one-man show; there was no work of consequence by him in the Tate Gallery's collection; and he had been either omitted from or trivially represented in important exhibitions of modern British art and in published surveys of the subject. There was to be one final indignity. The museum retrospective that he was convinced would change things for the better did finally materialize—but a year after his death and without *In the Hold* and *The Mud Bath*, his two most important paintings. Only through his teaching was Bomberg able to achieve the sort of influence and stature, albeit within a small group, that had eluded him in the larger arena of British art. Both Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff were students of Bomberg's, and they have both spoken about his liberating influence on their development.

Since his death, Bomberg has remained a shadowy figure, his name known among those with a close interest in British art. Now Richard Cork, the English art historian and critic, has set out to change our perception of the artist and our understanding of his place in the art of his time. Cork's monograph on Bomberg was published by Yale University Press last year, and this fall a retrospective he organized, which originated in London, opened at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven.[1]

Cork's aim is to fill in a historical blank and, one feels, right what he sees as a wrong—the art establishment's underestimation and neglect of Bomberg. In the exhibition catalogue, a distillation of his monograph, Cork describes Bomberg as an "important" painter, and speaks of the "size [and] complexity of Bomberg's achievement." But there are times when Cork's enthusiasm gets the better of him. Some of his readings of the paintings, particularly of the later ones, are so at odds with what is actually there that one feels the author is describing qualities he *wishes* to see rather than anything actually present.

It is all a noble effort, and, in purely art-historical terms, a valuable one. But I doubt the hierarchies of British art will be much altered by the exhibition and the two publications. Cork's labors have yielded a fuller picture of Bomberg but not a markedly different one. His pre-World War I pictures remain his lasting legacy, and even they seem slightly marginal today. There was something in Bomberg's outlook from the very beginning that limited the scope of his achievement. For all his passionate belief in the modernist creed, he always held back, never giving himself over to it completely. Thus, although modern in many respects, his pictures never sever their ties to the aesthetic assumptions—especially in their relationship to visible reality—of the pre-modern world. At root, Bomberg was a traditionalist striving heroically to be a modernist, and yet his avant-garde orientation made him unacceptable to the *real* traditionalists, such as the members of the Royal Academy. It was a contradiction that hobbled him from the beginning and all but ensured that, even had his circumstances been different, his role in the art of his time would have been only peripheral.

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1 "David Bomberg" was on view at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven from September 10 to October 30. A catalogue written by Richard Cork is available for $18.95.

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David Bomberg received his introduction to modern art the way the rest of England did, by visiting the three exhibitions which, between 1910 and 1912, did more to alter the artistic climate in that country than anything had until then. These were the two shows organized by the art critic Roger Fry, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" in 1910 and "Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition" in 1912, as well as the show of Futurist art in 1912 that surveyed a movement barely three years old. Collectively, these exhibitions brought every major avant-garde artist from Manet to Boccioni before a public for whom modern art had until then meant only the somber Impressionism of Walter Sickert and the Camden Town Group.

At the time of these landmark exhibitions, Bomberg, then in his early twenties, was a student at the Slade School of Art, the most prestigious art school in London. Prior to enrolling there, he had taken evening classes with Sickert at the Westminster School. At the Slade, Bomberg's instruction emphasized drawing, particularly with respect to mastering the essentials of form and establishing its underlying architecture. It was during his stay at the Slade that he became a convert to modernism, embracing both its radically new pictorial language and its celebration of a new era of mechanization and speed.

Yet even as he enthusiastically allied himself with the new aesthetic, he was never able to completely emancipate himself from the old one. The styles then in vogue, Cubism and Futurism, called for the dissolution of the world of appearances and the constitution of a self-sufficient pictorial order. But Bomberg remained committed to the depiction of form—the human figure in particular—as the foundation upon which a work of art was to rest. His one concession was that the form be simplified, purged of what were deemed to be its inessential attributes and modestly removed from the traditional canon of academic naturalism.

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Thus in 1914, on the occasion of his one-man show at the Chenil Gallery, he could hang *In the Hold* and *The Mud Bath*, pictures seemingly as radical as anything the Futurists were doing, but write in his catalogue statement, "I APPEAL to a *Sense of Form*." His adherence to form, and the conservatism it represented, thoroughly skewed his understanding of the revolution then under way. He wrote, "the modern pictures . . . had their beginning in the Old Masters and Michel Angelo was the chief of these," thus asserting his allegiance to a tradition that the Futurists were determined to overthrow.

Bomberg's contradictory posture confined him to practicing a superficial type of abstraction. *Interior*, a small, possibly preparatory watercolor from 1913, is all too revealing of his approach. It depicts a descending flight of steps whose physical integrity and spatial orientation the artist has preserved. There are some minimally irregular perspectives, the image has been somewhat flattened, and local color has been replaced by a decorative application of mainly primary hues. But on the whole, Bomberg's deformations are modest, amounting to no more than an abstract veneer applied to a fundamentally representational image. It is a start, but nothing compared to what someone like Mondrian achieves in his *Pier and Ocean* series, where landscape is gradually transformed into an array of "plus and minus" marks—a convincing abstract statement on its way to expressing a universal order. Although on two later occasions Bomberg would paint in an authentically Cubist manner, these were exceptions. *Interior* is the real Bomberg, for whom abstraction meant accepting reality essentially as he found it. There was never any question of re-inventing it.

When he attempts any sort of major statement, as he does with *In the Hold*, he quickly arrives at an impasse and is forced to adopt bizarre stratagems in order to fabricate the kind of abstraction he was unable to arrive at in the empirical manner practiced by Picasso, Braque, and other mainline modernists. *In the Hold* must be the most curious abstract painting in all of modern art. The canvas is covered with a mosaic of smallish, geometric shapes—mainly triangles—whose boisterous color scheme of flat blues, reds, and mauves is restrained by other more muted tones and a generous measure of black. Within all this activity, an ordering grid is discernible. Yet there is no trace of the painting's ostensible subject, men working on board a ship. This is odd, given Bomberg's belief in the figure and in genre subjects. Moreover, the picture doesn't fit into any stylistic category. It isn't strictly a Cubist picture because the shapes function as part of a uniformly flat surface pattern, like scraps of material in a quilt; they don't read as facets of an object. Nor is it Futurist, because the diagonals only delineate territorial boundary, not lines of force or the fusion of objects and ambient space. On every level, the picture is puzzling.

Only when one turns to Bomberg's preparatory drawing—fortunately included in the Yale exhibition—does the finished painting break its silence. The drawing shows a group of men making their way into and out of an open hatchway by means of a ladder. One of them is two-thirds of the way out. Below him, the head and hands of another have made it into the open. Above and around both men an assortment of arms and legs is visible. Volumes are simplified to a hard-edged, geometric purity and "modeled" by being bisected along their length into uniform, uninflected zones of grey and white—it amounts to a schematic chiaroscuro. Poses are stylized and have an angularity which sets up a dynamic rhythm throughout the drawing. (The staccato linear energy and subdued tones of this drawing and others from this period make these works among Bomberg's most beautiful creations.)

The drawing is overlaid with the linear grid the artist used as a guide in transferring the image to a larger canvas. But instead of progressively obscuring the grid as he painted in the image, as is customary,

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Bomberg made further use of it. He obviously saw it as a means of going beyond the schematic, narrative abstraction of his initial conception. Placed one upon the other, the grid's vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines fused with those describing the figures to form a kind of stencil of irregular shapes that covered the canvas surface. Into these shapes Bomberg inserted flat, non-local color that in places delineated the image beneath and elsewhere undercut it by emphasizing the abstract surface pattern.

With the drawing in mind, we can, by looking closely, discern in the painting the central, three-quarter length figure, the two hands, and part of the ladder. Everything else dissolves into a dizzying array of colored shapes. In its way, *In the Hold* is a remarkable accomplishment. But one can't help concluding that in its forced, artificial abstraction, it represents a digression from the aesthetic issues of the day. For Bomberg has done nothing more than use the grid as the agent of a deformation he was unable to accomplish by any other means. The result is a painting neither wholly new nor properly part of anything that had gone before, and almost too eccentric to fit easily into any stylistic category.

Nor was Bomberg able to get any closer to an authentically abstract idiom—and thus ensure his place in the artistic vanguard—in the expressionist paintings he began in the late Twenties, despite his belief that in them he had finally found his true artistic self. World War I had made him see the machine as a destructive force rather than as the agent of progress and salvation he and other members of his generation had initially believed it to be. He turned to landscape from the stylized, syncopated scenes of urban life in the belief that a renewed contact with nature promised the best hope for mankind. Cork never completely explains what made Bomberg turn to expressionism, but it seems clear that the move was linked to a similar impulse: the assertion of the self and the spirit over an impersonal, mechanistic manner.

But from this point to the end of his career Bomberg's paintings were again predicated on a misunderstanding of what constituted an abstract style. His aim was not to mimic the landscape view but to express the powerful natural forces he saw in it and its underlying abstract order. He did this by means of a pictorial language in which touch, stroke, and raw paint were intended to mold the image and communicate its effect upon him.

Standard expressionism, in other words. But Bomberg's work is a reminder that in this mode, as in others, a sacrifice was called for, a kind of immolation of all that was familiar. Once again, Bomberg couldn't do it. The early views of Toledo, for example, show him heightening color in a way that captures the bright light of the region and announces his nascent subjectivism. Yet this is merely laid over an otherwise realist image. And a 1946 view of Bideford Bay in Devon is a seascape "expressionistic" only in its loose handling of paint. Light, color, and space are essentially as they are found in nature. These pictures represent further instances of Bomberg limiting himself to a veneer of abstraction.

Some of the paintings that Bomberg did in Spain are somewhat redeemed by a sense of structure that accompanies his growing expressionist impulse. Paint is used to build the image as well as to evoke the emotional impact of the motif. In a 1935 painting of the town of Ronda seen from the depths of a ravine, Bomberg comes as close as he ever will to carrying off a synthesis of subjective feeling and observable fact. The painting is built up of free but tightly controlled strokes which describe a dramatic landscape view and create a rich, scabrous surface, just the sort of thing Bomberg's student Frank Auerbach was to do later on.

As Bomberg's handling became broader, and his responses more subjective, the hold on his beloved "form"—the image in nature—became increasingly tenuous, finally falling away altogether. Unable to invent anything to replace it, his efforts at abstraction foundered. Structure dissolved

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and the paintings became chaotic, incoherent. From the middle Thirties on, the painterly mark all but ceases to play any form-delineating role in his work, serving only to indicate a subjective response to something seen, a kind of personal notation or code that is inaccessible to everyone but the artist himself. Richard Cork writes of one such work, *Trendrine in Sun, Cornwall* (1947), that it "transmitted the full tactile intensity of Bomberg's desire to project himself into the heart of the landscape." Hardly. Here, as elsewhere, there are adumbrations of an idea about responding to the world through paint, but nothing more.

There's a memorable moment about halfway through the exhibition when we come upon two portraits done in the early Thirties. One, *The Red Hat*, is of Bomberg's wife. The other, a self-portrait, shows the artist staring out at us with a mixture of haughtiness and caution. Painted the same year, they are quite different. *The Red Hat* is executed in a loose, gestural manner and situates the sitter within a welter of brushstrokes. The handling of Bomberg's self-portrait is looser and more controlled, and we see the room he's painting in.

These are among Bomberg's most successful works, in which form and expression are held in perfect equilibrium. What's interesting about both, though, is the way Bomberg has felt compelled to call upon the resources of pre-abstract painting to impose an order that would otherwise be lacking. Both paintings use traditional chiaroscuro—albeit in a somewhat summary fashion—to give the faces a tactility and definition Bomberg's painterliness alone would fail to convey, and it places them strikingly close to Walter Sickert's impressionism, where light and lighting are similarly the means used to articulate form within an overall surface pattern of brushstrokes. Bomberg, it will be remembered, briefly studied under Sickert in his early days as an art student, and one of his earliest works, *Bedroom Picture* of 1911-12, shows the older artist's influence in its choice of a domestic interior as a subject; its complex pictorial space; and the dominant role accorded light in the painting.

There's something appropriate about this no doubt unwitting gravitation to an earlier mode. For Impressionism was the last modern style to retain contact with the world of appearances, and as such was particularly suited to Bomberg's equivocal orientation in relation to the present and the past. In the end, Bomberg's relationship with the avant-garde in art consisted of an accommodation, not an embrace. He remained a traditionalist, a man unable to give himself completely to the modernist aesthetic he so passionately believed in.

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Dance

A vanity affair

by Eva Resnikova

Last spring, reviewing one of the dutifully correct and deadly dull performances that have come to characterize Mikhail Baryshnikov's American Ballet Theatre, I wrote that it almost made you long for the bad old days of Lucia Chase.

I was kidding. Cynthia Gregory and Fernando Bujones, apparently, are not. In an odd program entitled "Together!," self-produced and presented at City Center for a week in late September, Gregory and Bujones, like White Russians wistful for a more glamorous brand of authoritarianism, invoked the final years of the Chase era, which came to an abrupt halt in 1980 with the forced transfer of power from the aging company co-founder and benefactress to the young Soviet-defector superstar.

Baryshnikov had been a thorn in Bujones's side from the moment of his defection in the summer of 1974, when news of the Soviet dancer's leap to freedom overshadowed the American's achievement of becoming the first of his countrymen to win a gold medal at Varna, the most prestigious international ballet competition. (Baryshnikov had won it in 1967.) And despite Bujones's shameless self-promotion—he once said in an interview in the *Times* that "Baryshnikov now has the publicity, but I have the talent"—he would forever remain in the other dancer's shadow. When Baryshnikov became Bujones's boss, it was only a matter of time before a showdown. The decisive moment came in 1985, when Bujones, frustrated by a lack of new roles, asked ABT to hire Maurice Béjart to create a work on him. Baryshnikov declined. Bujones refused to attend rehearsals until his offer was accepted. He was promptly fired. Since then he has made a career as a globe-trotting guest artist.

Though still technically on the ABT roster, the forty-two-year-old Gregory dances infrequently. More important, she has not been accorded the deference to which she evidently feels entitled, by virtue of her talent, seniority, and temperament. She has therefore taken matters into her own hands: the "Who's Who in the Company" in the City Center Playbill informs us that Gregory is "America's *prima ballerina assoluta*." Who bestowed this coveted title upon her? I discovered the answer by chance. Leafing through the October issue of *Vogue*, I came across a handsome color photograph of Gregory in medias grand jeté. It was an advertisement for Rolex watches and bore the legend, "Cynthia Gregory and Rolex: Beautifully Paired." The copy below read: "*Prima ballerina assoluta* is a title once conferred only by czars. Today it's bestowed by the universal will of the dance world. Cynthia Gregory, luminous star of American Ballet Theatre, is one of the few of our time."

So that explains it—it was the universal will of the dance world. It also explains the above-the-title producer billing that Rolex

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received in the "Together!" program, as well as a tasteless onstage product reference. This set Rolex back $50,000; the rest of the $400,000 budget was provided by Gregory's lawyer husband. So "Together!" was a vanity production in every sense of the word.

Though Gregory and Bujones have never stooped this low before, they have always been vulgar dancers. Gregory once appeared onstage at the Met in *Grand Pas Classique* smoking a cigarette; she later explained that her action was really intended as a protest against the empty virtuosity of the piece—which, by the way, she included in the City Center program. Also included were such sure-fire virtuoso pas de deux as *Don Quixote* and "Black Swan," the latter of which never fails to rouse an audience to a frenzy, even when, as here, its thirty-two whipping fouetté turns for the ballerina and grande pirouette for the danseur are delivered in a rather lackluster manner.

There is a place for this type of vulgarity in ballet, under the right, usually gala, conditions, and "Together!" was the perfect opportunity. Unfortunately, the dancers felt compelled to pretend that what they were doing was really Art. So instead of simply presenting a string of virtuoso excerpts for our delectation, they came up with the conceit of a rehearsal, complete with corps girls sewing toe shoes and stretching on the sidelines, and, worst of all, talking. There was commentary from a "ballet master" (e.g., "Lovely as ever!," and at one point, glancing at his wrist, "By my Rolex . . ."), which was delivered live, plus taped voice-over by Gregory and Bujones.

The effect was unintentionally comic, especially on opening night, when the "ballet master's" body mike was operational only intermittently. The dancers' forays into verbal expression were akin to the waterloos met by many of the stars of the silent screen when they attempted to extend their careers into talking pictures: whiny, squeaky voices, and Bujones encumbered with a lisping Cuban accent to boot. The actual content of the narration—credited to Robert W. Larkin—was embarrassing. (Though the amplification problems made it difficult at times to ascertain what the "ballet master" was saying, I could swear that after excerpts from *Giselle* and *La Sylphide* his segue was "But enough of the Romantic era.") The dancers' dialogue consisted of each extolling the virtues of the other (for example, Cynthia on Fernando: "How amazing he is!"). "Together!" was the only performance I've ever attended where the dancers served as their own simultaneous onstage spin doctors. Bujones even got to tell the story of his winning the gold medal at Varna and cabling Lucia with the news. The dread name of Baryshnikov was never uttered.

The dancing itself was variable. At times it seemed that Gregory was using the rehearsal setting as an excuse for not dancing full out. In the excerpt from the first act of *Giselle*, for example, her glissades were merely sketched in; and though she was never much of a jumper, age has further diminished the pliancy of her plié. But her balances and triple pirouettes, especially in the maligned *Grand Pas Classique*, were as impressive as ever, and there were even a few moments of genuine artistry in the *Sylphide* excerpt. Bujones is sadly past his prime and seemed constricted by the size of the City Center stage.

If proof were needed that star dancers are generally ill-equipped to serve as their own artistic directors, it lay in the two "world premieres" presented as the middle portion of the program. The first, Francis Patrelle's *Beloved/Memories*, was another entry in the enchanted-ballroom-ballet genre. Set to Alexander Borodin's String Quartet no. 2, with the dancers costumed in Fifties formal attire, the ballet suffered from severe conceptual problems. The purpose of the three couples who mirrored Christine Spizzo and Medhi Bahiri never became clear, and the insertion of a vision scene from *Kismet* into the middle of a senior prom was downright bizarre.

At least Patrelle showed himself capable

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of creating fluent, if banal, movement. Lynne Taylor-Corbett's *Concertino*, to a harmonica concerto by one Vilem Tausky, was simply inept. It began introspective and soulful for Gregory, then turned show-off and jazzy for Bujones—a curious approach for a work that is purported to celebrate a partnership.

The program ended with a peculiar choice: the third act of *Coppélia*, in a tacky production borrowed from the Pittsburgh Ballet and staged with no sense of period style by Roni Mahler. The choreography, often unrecognizable, included such anachronisms as fouettés for Swanilda and a grande pirouette for Franz. Had Delibes not been playing in the background one would have thought oneself back in "Black Swan." Robert Larkin's scene-stealing slapstick priest was a disgrace.

The audience was exactly what the program deserved, obligingly interrupting the music with applause any time a step was repeated more than three times, including the most basic circle of piqué turns and the shakiest of fouettés. The week-long run set box-office records at City Center, and a tour is contemplated.

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Books

A genius for publicity

by Bruce Bawer

What does it say about contemporary American culture that two of the most celebrated novels of our time have never, in fact, seen print—namely, Truman Capote's *Answered Prayers* and Harold Brodkey's *A Party of Animals*? Think of it: for decades, while many a gifted but obscure novelist presented his work to the world only to emerge with his gifts and his obscurity intact, both Capote and Brodkey garnered an astonishing amount of media attention and critical acclaim simply by offering, in place of their respective long-awaited masterworks, the occasional newsy tidbit about how the works-in-progress were coming along and how magnificent they were going to be. Both writers demonstrated the peculiar truth that in this media-centered age, a book that actually exists between hard covers is news for only one day, while a book that remains little more than a gleam in its author's eye can stay news for years. For a time, Capote was considerably ahead of Brodkey on the publicity meter, but now that Capote is gone and Knopf is issuing a collection of Brodkey's work, entitled *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode*,[1] the file of prominent magazine pieces on Brodkey is growing apace, so that he may yet overtake Capote as the twentieth-century American writer most celebrated for a book he's never published. In recent months his slender, bearded face has stared out from the pages of *New York*, which entitled its cover story (by Dinitia Smith) "The Genius," and *Vanity Fair*, in which James Wolcott concluded that "the lesson of Harold Brodkey's career is that genius can be both too much and not enough." Similar "lessons," it will be remembered, were once drawn about Capote; it is interesting that Brodkey, like the author of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, thinks of himself as a genius and enjoys working the high I.Q. scores of his childhood into his stories and interviews.

A Party of Animals dates back almost as far as *Answered Prayers*. Capote planned his would-be magnum opus as early as 1958; Brodkey signed a contract with Random House for his book in 1964, moving in 1970 to Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and in 1979 (after Farrar, Straus had advertised the novel's impending publication in a number of its seasonal catalogues) to Knopf. As was the case with *Answered Prayers*, supposed excerpts of Brodkey's novel-in-progress have been published along the way in magazines—*Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Partisan Review*. As Capote talked about his book right up till his death in 1984—describing its structure, pace, and atmosphere in such elaborate detail that his complete recorded comments on the subject, if brought together by some enterprising professor, might well add up to a most unusual document: the Monarch

1 *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode*, by Harold Brodkey; Knopf, 596 pages, $24.95.

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Notes to a non-existent novel—so Brodkey has discussed at length the specifications of *A Party of Animals*.

There's one striking difference between the two writers, however: whereas Capote had already established himself as a first-rate writer when the *Answered Prayers* saga began, Brodkey had, until this year, published only one full-length work—a short-story collection entitled *First Love and Other Sorrows* (1958). To examine the stories in *First Love*—an exercise which can provide a highly instructive prolegomenon to a perusal of *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode*—is to be surprised that its author's unpublished work could be the focus of so much feverish speculation. For *First Love* is a decidedly unspectacular item—an assemblage of quiet, innocuous little fictions about Midwestern boyhood, campus romance, and young marrieds. Since eight of the nine stories appeared originally in *The New Yorker*, it should not be surprising that the campus is invariably that of Harvard University, that the young marrieds are invariably fainter, more plastic versions of John Cheever's vaguely discontented New York suburbanites, and that the style is invariably spare, precise, graceful, and passionless. In most of these stories, every detail seems shamelessly tailored to the requirements of 1950s *New Yorker* fiction. As Melvin Maddocks wrote in a review of *First Love* for *The Christian Science Monitor*, "A sense of vital, untampered-with conflict is missing. These stories seem too patly, too cautiously worked out. They are Japanese-garden fiction with every pebble in place." The reviewer for the *Atlantic Monthly* agreed, noting that Brodkey "appears to be the kind of artist committed to working in the minor key which *The New Yorker* has made fashionable."

Yet not all the stories in *First Love* are equally contrived. The first three stories in the book—"The State of Grace," "First Love and Other Sorrows," and "The Quarrel"—are all told in the first person (the others are in the third person), and each of them manifestly derives from the author's own youth. They have a touch of genuine feeling and originality that the remaining stories in the book don't have; their boy protagonists are the only characters in *First Love* who come alive. Perhaps the most memorable of these three stories is "The State of Grace," whose protagonist is a thirteen-year-old resident of St. Louis; as in Brodkey's later, more blatantly autobiographical stories of boyhood, the narrator makes a point of how tall he was, how attractive, how brilliant ("I always had the highest grades—higher than anybody who had ever attended the schools I went to—and I terrified my classmates"), and how "remarkable": "I was smart and virtuous . . . and fairly attractive, maybe even very attractive. I was often funny and always interesting. I had read everything and knew everything and got unbelievable grades. Of course I was someone whose love was desired. Mother, my teachers, my sister, girls at school, other boys—they all wanted me to love them." (This—like many of Brodkey's later stories—leads one to wonder: *Was any child ever so admired?*) The story concerns the thirteen-year-old's relationship to one of these "other boys"—a "precocious and delicate" seven-year-old neighbor for whom our protagonist baby-sits and with whom he identifies, since he feels that both he and the child are unloved and unappreciated by their parents. Yet he doesn't give the boy his love because the boy, like everyone else, doesn't love *him*: "I was fierce and solitary and acrid . . . and there was no one who loved me first. I could see a hundred cravennesses in the people I knew, a thousand flaws, a million weaknesses. If I had to love first, I would love only perfection." The story ends with a rather touching paragraph, the last sentence of which is, in its modest way, probably the most emotionally unrestrained in a very restrained book:

> Really, that's all there was to this story. The boy I was, the child Edward was. That and the terrible desire to suddenly turn and run shouting back through the corridors of time,

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> screaming at the boy I was, searching him out, and pounding on his chest: Love him, you damn fool, love him.

Of the nine stories in *First Love*, it is the three stories of boyhood that prefigure the direction Brodkey was to follow in his later work; and of all the sentences in the book, it is perhaps the closing sentence of "The State of Grace" that comes closest to the passionate, oracular prose for which Brodkey would become famous. To read Brodkey's debut volume is to recognize that it wasn't necessarily a bad idea for him to pursue the Midwestern-boyhood material that his later stories would obsess over; on the contrary, any reader who looked at *First Love* in 1958 would have had to conclude—from the strength of "The State of Grace," "First Love and Other Sorrows," and "The Quarrel," relative to the other stories—that if Brodkey wanted to produce fresh and lyrical fiction, he would stand a better chance of doing so if he abandoned the college-romance and young-suburbanite material and concentrated instead on the imaginative treatment of themes drawn from his boyhood. Yet those three stories also contain intimations of some of the cardinal failings of Brodkey's later fiction—namely, his egocentrism, his indifference to plot, and even (in that closing sentence of "The State of Grace") his addiction to sentimental, self-pitying, and overheated prose.

To be sure, the first five stories in Brodkey's new book do not exhibit these failings in profusion. Published in *The New Yorker* between 1963 and 1969, they are, like the majority of stories in *First Love*, typical *New Yorker* stories, if with a few significant differences from those Fifties narratives: longer, darker, more adventurous, they represent the *New Yorker* story at a somewhat later stage in its development, the mid-to-late-Sixties era of, say, Cheever's "The Swimmer." The earliest and longest of them, "The Abundant Dreamer," makes use of a present-tense narrative and a generous number of flashbacks to tell the story of Marcus Weill, a highly regarded Jewish-American film director who reacts with apparent indifference when told, on the set of his movie in Rome, that his grandmother has just died. Gradually, the flashbacks reveal to us the intricate set of circumstances and feelings behind that reaction, and what ultimately emerges is a rather affecting evocation of the emotionally fragile boy that stands behind, and to an extent still exists within, this egocentric and seemingly self-sufficient man of consequence. Perhaps it is needless to say that there are strong similarities between Weill and Brodkey, both abundant dreamers: like Brodkey, Weill is a "genius" with a complex relationship to his Jewishness and his past; as Brodkey was raised by relatives after his mother's death, so Weill was raised after his parents' divorce by his grandmother. What's more, when Brodkey writes about Weill that "a movie is to him primarily an arrangement of recognitions, an *allée* laid out so that at every step what is being seen alters the sense of what has been seen," Brodkey appears to be offering as well, by implication, his own definition of fiction. Yet "The Abundant Dreamer" is not merely a document in self-absorption or a meditation on memory; it is an objective short story in which Brodkey does not confuse himself with Weill, does not place Weill on a pedestal, does not treat Weill's thoughts on art and Judaism and death as holy writ. Though deeply felt and abundantly human, the story steers clear of rhetorical excess; in terms of style and structure, it is as elegant as anything else Brodkey has ever published.

In nearly the same league is "Bookkeeping" (1968), the story of an evening on which Avram Olensky, a thirtyish New York Jew, finds himself caught in the crossfire between his self-destructive Dutch friend Annetje—whose parents both perished in World War Two and who is experiencing the aftereffects of an LSD "experiment"—and his dinner guests, a well-to-do New England WASP and her German husband, neither of whom sympathizes with

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Annetje's predicament. Inevitably, the conversation turns to the Holocaust, to questions of collective guilt and individual responsibility. As in "State of Grace" and "The Abundant Dreamer," the nature of love and friendship figures importantly here; Avram must weigh compassion against gratitude, must determine the extent of his various obligations to his friends. Here, too, as in "The Abundant Dreamer" (though not quite so fully as in "The State of Grace"), the protagonist can be identified with Brodkey himself; as in both "The Abundant Dreamer" and "The State of Grace," furthermore, the protagonist's love and compassion seem to be regarded by both protagonist and author as favors, as gifts to be bestowed or withheld, often for strategic reasons. As the boy in "The State of Grace" refuses to confer his love upon his seven-year-old charge, and as the director in "The Abundant Dreamer" decides that he doesn't have time to "fend off death" for his grandmother, so "Bookkeeping" ends with Avram contemplating not the tragedy of Annetje's life but his own virtue in being so kind to her. Is Brodkey out to make a point about human self-centeredness? It doesn't seem so. He doesn't even appear to be aware that these characters are self-centered; to his mind, this is simply the way people think about things. In the world according to Brodkey, true selflessness doesn't exist.

By far the slightest of these five Sixties stories is the short, facile "On the Waves" (1965), which depicts the unspoken rapprochement—in a Venetian gondola, of course, this being a *New Yorker* story—between a divorced ex-tennis player and his less-than-believable seven-year-old daughter (who finds Venice "insincere"). The remaining Sixties stories are somewhat more impressive, though not without crucial weaknesses. "Hofstedt and Jean—and Others" (1969) is about a forty-five-year-old English professor's romance with a student less than half his age; despite certain merits, the story is rather too long and diffuse, crowded with extraneous and

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redundant details in what comes across as an amateurish attempt to capture its characters completely and definitively. The ultimate point seems to be that Jean's attraction, for Hofstedt, resides less in her inherent charms than in the fact that she reminds his old college buddy of the buddy's wife when she was young. Hofstedt's affair, in short, is essentially a consequence of the two men's puerile competitiveness, which dates back to their days at Harvard (where they were, naturally, the top two students in their class). Though Hofstedt never tires of analyzing his own thoughts and feelings, he pays little heed to Jean's; indeed, he hardly makes an effort to know what they are. His commentary upon her is confined chiefly to expressions of admiration for her body, cruel ridicule of her use of slang, and a superior, dismissive attitude toward her deepest expressions of affection. Essentially, his take on the relationship amounts to: *I'm too good for her, of course, but being as vulnerable as the next man to human folly I find her youth and beauty irresistible.* Is Brodkey's purpose here to satirize Hofstedt for this self-absorption? Decidedly not. There's no ironic distance at all between this author and his obnoxious protagonist; in fact, Brodkey seems not to realize for a moment just how obnoxious Hofstedt is. At one point in the story a friend tells Hofstedt that he "occup[ies] a private world," and this story is unquestionably set in that world. It is Hofstedt's emotions and observations, and no one else's, which we are supposed to take seriously.

Only the last of Brodkey's Sixties narratives has a female protagonist. "The Shooting Range" (1969) chronicles the life of a middle-class woman named Ann Kampfel from the time of her romance, at age twenty, with a factory foreman in a small Illinois town, to her long, not particularly happy marriage to a Washington bureaucrat. Bouncing along from one period of Ann's life to the next, the story doesn't pause often to render Ann's thoughts in any depth, but instead concentrates upon capturing the shifting currents of her romantic life over the years. The picture of Ann never quite comes together: though she is a believable character, one feels as if one knows her only from a distance, like a neighbor glimpsed every so often from across the street. When Brodkey tells us that "Ann never contemplated infidelity [because] it would make Fennie [her husband] unhappy," we accept the explanation, but we don't feel as if we know Ann well enough to be certain that she would actually think this way. We don't know why she leaves the foreman (whom she loves) or why she marries the bureaucrat (whom she doesn't) or why she doesn't pursue the career for which she prepared in college. What we do know about her is not very endearing: she's grim and humorless and fatalistic, and in her whole life, as Brodkey gives it to us, there is hardly a moment of real joy or even lightheartedness; she derives no apparent pleasure from her husband, her children, or the privileges of her life in Washington. Brodkey's point, however, is not that this is an exceedingly dour woman, but that life can be an exceedingly dour affair.

He seems also to want to make a point about class. At the beginning of this extremely long story, Ann has been talked by a college boyfriend into being a Communist, a believer in "the brotherhood of man and the release of men from economic pressures that distorted them and their lives" (the year is 1934); the foreman persuades her easily enough to leave the Party, and she goes on to lead the life of a typical bureaucrat's wife. Yet it is not until the end of the story that she, now the mother of two grown daughters, complains she's "turning middle-class . . . . Why is that, Fennie?" It's a disappointing conclusion; one feels cheated to have come all this way for so feeble a fare-thee-well. It isn't even clear whether we're expected to mourn with Ann over her middle-class metamorphosis or laugh at her for not realizing that she's been middle-class all her life. Perhaps we're supposed to recognize Ann's seemingly

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automatic and self-defeating life choices as having been a consequence of her middle-class mentality; if so, however, the first forty-one of the story's forty-two pages must be considered extremely ineffective—for there is little justification in these pages for blaming Ann's confusing behavior on the class into which she was born. Even discounting the class-mentality theme, the story is a weak one. In its shape and tone, and of course in its attempt to present an entire unremarkable life in unadorned fashion, it much resembles Flaubert's "Un coeur simple"; but any reader who recognizes this similarity must be struck at once by everything that Flaubert has and that Brodkey lacks: not only poignancy and moral rigor, but also a humility before life, an affection for one's characters, and an instinctive awareness that one is addressing an audience.

Brodkey's four substantial Sixties stories, then, have their failings. To be sure, they are all highly readable, even compelling, and are blessed with poise and grace; unlike most of the stories in *First Love*, they have the texture of real life, and their characters convince. But to read through them in chronological order is to feel increasingly that they are the work of an author who is eager to render an extremely complicated vision of life, but who either has not yet brought that vision into focus or has not yet arrived at a satisfactory means of communicating it. To put it another way, Brodkey wants us to climb inside his skin—or a skin that is very much like his own—and to experience what it is like there, but he is incapable of giving us our bearings; he speaks to us in a language of the heart, but it is a language that is not quite our own, and is one for which he has failed to provide a lexicon. So it is that the protagonists of these four sizable Sixties stories—Marcus Weill, Avram Olensky, Leo Hofstedt, and Ann Kampfel—are alive enough to make one believe in them and to make one angry at them, but they never grow quite familiar enough to make one understand them or care about them.

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It was, of course, not these Sixties stories but those of the Seventies and Eighties that catapulted Harold Brodkey into a position of eminence enjoyed by few writers in our time. Thirteen in number, these stories occupy more than two-thirds of *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode*. Turning the page after the end of "The Shooting Range" and beginning the first of these stories—"Innocence," originally published in the *American Review* in 1973—one crosses a boundary into an utterly different world. Suddenly Brodkey's prose is loose, talky, even offhand. The sense of control that is evident throughout his earlier work has disappeared. Brodkey makes little attempt to disguise the fact that he and his protagonist—here, as in most of these later stories, called Wiley Silenowicz—are essentially the same person. He makes little attempt, indeed, to pretend that what he is giving us is fiction and not autobiography. Toward the beginning of "Innocence," Brodkey unleashes what is, in view of his previous output, a remarkable manifesto:

> I distrust summaries, any kind of gliding through time, any too great a claim that one is in control of what one recounts; I think someone who claims to understand but who is obviously calm, someone who claims to write with emotion recollected in tranquillity, is a fool and a liar. To understand is to tremble. To recollect is to reenter and be riven. An acrobat after spinning through the air in a mockery of flight stands erect on his perch and mockingly takes his bow as if what he is being applauded for was easy for him and cost him nothing, although meanwhile he is covered with sweat and his smile is edged with a relief chilling to think about; he is indulging in a show-business style; he is pretending to be superhuman. I am bored with that and with where it has brought us. I admire the authority of being on one's knees in front of the event.

At the time of its original publication, a reader of "Innocence" might not have made much of this passage, but to read it where it appears in *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode* is to recognize it as a veritable declaration of independence on Brodkey's part—independence, that is, from the obligation to transfigure his obsessions into fiction, from the obligation to rein in his *Angst* and to surmount his morbid self-obsession and to edit his rambling ruminations into something well-crafted and coherent. If in his stories of the Sixties he sought an effective means of rendering his authorial vision in fictional terms, in "Innocence" he abandons that attempt, essentially renouncing, in his manifesto, the very concept of fiction. His true interest, after all, lies not in imagined lives—or, for that matter, in the real lives of other people—but in the tormented history of his own soul; with "Innocence" he announces his unwillingness to persist in pretending otherwise: his refusal to continue hiding behind some fictional characters and feigning curiosity about others, his impatience to serve up reams of vatic, well-nigh stream-of-consciousness prose in place of the taut, polished sentences he'd produced for two decades. Just as another *New Yorker* writer, J.D. Salinger, had turned from the compact, civilized prose of his *Nine Stories* to manic, effusive excursions into the eccentric world of the Glass family, so Brodkey now put his *New Yorker* stories of the Fifties and Sixties behind him and embarked upon a frenzied, fanatical voyage into himself.

To read "Innocence" and most of the stories that follow, then—the majority of which have been identified, at one time or another, as sections of *A Party of Animals*—is to find oneself trapped within the extraordinarily arrogant and self-obsessed soul of Harold Brodkey, a.k.a. Wiley Silenowicz, and condemned again and again to relive his agonizing childhood and youth. Brodkey's is, to be sure, a genuinely tragic personal history. He was born in 1930 in Staunton, Illinois, with the name of Aaron Roy Weintraub. His mother died when he was an infant, whereupon his father, an illiterate junk man, allowed him to be adopted by relatives named Doris and

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Joseph Brodkey; these new parents renamed him Harold Roy Brodkey, and raised him in a St. Louis suburb named University City. When Brodkey was nine, his adoptive father had a stroke or heart attack and became an invalid, finally passing away when the boy was fourteen; when he was thirteen, his adoptive mother came down with cancer, and lingered on for years in pain and bitterness, finally dying while Brodkey was an undergraduate at Harvard. Wiley shares every bit of this personal history with Brodkey, the chief differences being that Wiley's adoptive parents are named not Doris and Joseph but Lila and S. L.

Life with Lila and S. L., as recounted in these stories, is hardly *Life with Father*. In "A Story in an Almost Classical Mode" (1973), Brodkey/Wiley describes a typical day of his youth: "I would come home from school to the shadowy house, the curtains drawn and no lights on, or perhaps one, and she [Lila] would be roaming barefooted with wisps of hair sticking out and her robe lopsided and coming open." If he said hello, she would scream: "Is that all you can say? I'm in *pain*. Don't you care? My God, my God, what kind of selfish person are you? I can't stand it." If he said, "Hello, Momma, how is your pain?" she would scream: "You fool, I don't want to think about it! It was all right for a moment! Look what you've done—you've brought it back . . . . *I don't want to be reminded of my pain all the time!*" In either case, she would end up yelling: "Do you think it's easy to die?. . . Do something for me! Put yourself in my place! Help me! Why don't you help me?" One cannot read this sort of thing without feeling profound sympathy for Harold Brodkey and for the boy he was; if even a fraction of his anecdotes about his childhood and youth are true—and taking into account, as well, the distinct possibility that Brodkey is giving us a very one-sided view of things—then it is certainly a great credit to him that he survived and prospered. To criticize him for his continued fixation upon such memories would be not only unfair but heartless.

Yet a critic who is faced with the task of passing judgment on these stories—and of evaluating, as well, the legitimacy of the reputation that they have gained—cannot, alas, do anything other than criticize most of them. For the fact is that Brodkey is so fixated upon the tragic memories of his childhood and youth that he has virtually no sense of proportion about them. In one story after another, he offers up pages of gratuitous detail, straining, it seems, to squeeze every last drop of significance out of every last inane particular. Whole paragraphs are devoted to such matters as his adoptive mother's pet phrases, her opinions on a multitude of subjects, the way she dressed, the way she walked. Though these stories contain a number of affecting—and even emotionally draining—passages, the adversities and tensions and interrelationships and tastes and daily routines of the family in which Brodkey grew up are described so extensively and repeatedly that the ultimate effect of these stories is almost invariably one of numbing monotony. As a rule, not only is there no plot—there's no movement whatsoever. What power the stories do have is primarily not aesthetic but documentary in nature; the young Brodkey's diary, if he'd kept one, would doubtless be just as powerful, and in precisely the same way. Indeed, to all intents and purposes these stories do amount to a diary, the record of a man talking to himself about himself. Take "A Story in an Almost Classical Mode," for instance: it is not until the story's final sentence that Brodkey seems at all aware of or concerned about his audience, and even then his awareness comes across as little more than an afterthought. "Make what use of this you like," he says, effectively admitting that, aside from sheer confession, he doesn't really know *what* his intention here has been.

And confession is certainly the word for most of these stories. Brodkey is baldly, brutally, shamelessly confessional, speculating about his boyhood state of mind in the tireless, self-absorbed manner of a patient

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on a psychiatrist's couch: ". . . perhaps I was not a very loving person. Perhaps I was self-concerned and a hypocrite . . . . Perhaps I just wanted to get out with a whole skin." That such narcissistic maunderings fail to get us anywhere doesn't appear to matter to Brodkey; he seems to think that they are in themselves somehow equivalent to self-knowledge. If there is a reason for his obsessive, seemingly pointless accumulation of remembered details, it appears to be that he believes the more details he sets down, the more satisfactory a catharsis he will achieve. As for the rest of us, he seems to be suggesting, we can bloody well sit back and watch. Most writers feel that they have to earn a reader's attention; the Brodkey of these Seventies and Eighties pieces has the earmarks of someone who feels he has an inalienable right to that attention. If there is considerable anger at large in the last several hundred pages of *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode*, it may well be the anger of a man who is furious at the world for expecting him to earn the attention he believes he received unbidden when he was the star of the seventh grade.

So similar are most of these recent Brodkey stories that it would be an exercise in Brodkeyan monotony to describe them all in detail. This is not to suggest that there are no distinctions to be made. Two of the stories—Brodkey's Gospels, we might call them—provide most of the principal family facts, and are so long and windy that, to the reader determined to get through them, they seem positively Saharalike. Both center on our boy hero's relationship with his adoptive mother; one is "A Story in an Almost Classical Mode" (in which Brodkey and his parents, incidentally, go by their real names) and the other is "Largely an Oral History of My Mother" (1976). These twin dissertations repeat each other almost as extensively as they do themselves. Two other stories are much shorter and markedly more tolerable. The sixteen-page "His Son, in His Arms, in Light, Aloft" (1975) makes use of a single exhilarating memory—of being lifted into the air, as a child, by his father (here christened "Charlie")—as the focal point for a meditation on their relationship; unlike most of these stories, it has at least a hint of shape and of literary purpose, and rather movingly recalls a father who had moments of "accidental glory." The nine-page "Puberty" (1975), a recollection of an experience in the Boy Scouts, is very slight, but is also the most straightforward and well written of the post-"Shooting Range" pieces. Other stories seem more peripheral, and read like forced attempts by Brodkey to develop themes from his childhood which he'd given relatively short shrift elsewhere. "Play" (1973) is a pallid twenty-one-page discourse on the games he played at age eleven; "Ceil" (1983) unconvincingly addresses the subject of the biological mother that Brodkey never knew; "The Nurse's Music" (1988) centers on his governess, "The Pain Continuum" (1976) on his sister, and "The Boys on their Bikes" (1985) on his best friend Jimmy; "S. L." (1985) rehashes the material of "His Son" at forty pages' length.

Not all of the post-Sixties stories are about Brodkey's family. "Verona—a Young Woman Speaks" (1977) is an odd little monologue by a young woman about a childhood experience; the closing story, "Angel" (1985), is the collection's version of the Book of Revelations—a bizarre forty-page narrative about God and man at Harvard that begins with this sentence: "Today the Angel of Silence and of Inspiration (toward Truth) appeared to a number of us passing by on the wall in front of Harvard Hall—this was a little after three o'clock—today is October twenty-fifth, nineteen-hundred-and-fifty-one." And "Innocence"—all thirty-one pages of it—relates in exhausting physical detail how Wiley manages, during his senior year at Harvard, to give a willful, beautiful classmate her first orgasm. Since most of the story is written at an unvarying fever pitch—with numerous run-on sentences and words in italics, endless series of parallel phrases and clauses and

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extravagant modifiers piled up on top of each other in frantic, desperate emphasis—to quote from virtually any portion of it is to give a fair sense of the whole:

> She called out, "Wiley, Wiley!" but she called it out in a *whisper*, the whisper of someone floating across a night sky, of someone crazily ascending, someone who was going crazy, who was taking on the mad purity and temper of angels, someone who was tormented unendurably by this, who was unendurably frightened, whose pleasure was enormous, half human, mad. Then she screamed in rebuke, "Wiley!" She screamed my name: "*Wiley!*"—she did it hoarsely and insanely, asking for help, but blaming me, and merely as exclamation; it was a gutter sound in part, and ugly; the ugliness destroyed nothing, or maybe it had an impetus of its own, but it whisked away another covering, a membrane of ordinariness—I don't know—and her second pair of wings began to beat; her whole body was aflutter on the bed. I was as wet as—as some fish, thonking away, sweatily. Grinding away. I said, "It's O.K., Orra. It's O.K." And poked on. In midair. She shouted, "*What is this?*" She shouted in the way a tremendously large person who can defend herself might shout at someone who was unwisely beating her up. She shouted—angrily, as an announcement of anger, it seemed—"*Oh, my God!*" Like: *Who broke this cup?* I plugged on. She raised her torso, her head, she looked me clearly in the eye, her eyes were enormous, were bulging and she said, "*Wiley, it's happening!*"

Though the story is about Orra's first orgasm, the hero of the piece is of course Wiley. Orra has been with many other men, and claims that she's "too sexual to have orgasms"; it is Wiley, with his superior wisdom and his gift for the art of copulation, who teaches her otherwise. Here as elsewhere, Brodkey habitually refers to the sex act with the word *fuck*: "I figured I had kept her from being too depressed after fucking—it's hard for a girl with any force in her and any brains to accept the whole thing of fucking, of being fucked without trying to turn it on its end, so that she does some fucking, or some fucking up; I mean, the mere power of arousing the man so he wants to fuck isn't enough: she wants him to be willing to die in order to fuck." Though with this repeated use of the blunt Anglo-Saxonism he seems to be trying to identify himself as a worldly, with-it adult, Brodkey—this man who is ever fascinated with himself at age thirteen—sounds instead very much like a thirteen-year-old boy reveling in Dirty Words. Or, rather, like a vulgar man who thinks like a boy, a man who, preoccupied with his own physical sensations and ego gratification, regards his sexual partner only as a football field upon which to demonstrate his manly prowess—orgasm as touchdown. Sex, here, has little or nothing to do with affection and everything to do with power and the aggressive assertion of self. Not even the oeuvre of Norman Mailer contains a more gruesome piece of self-advertisement (though, as critics have noted, "Innocence" bears a strong resemblance to Mailer's famous piece of sexual braggadocio, "The Time of Her Time," which is also about giving a formidable young lady her first orgasm).

That Brodkey attributes to his orgasmic heroine "the mad purity and temper of angels" should not be too surprising, for in his hands the distinctions between such phenomena as college girls' sex lives and imagined heavenly visitations quickly evaporate. To Brodkey, nothing seems to mean anything unless it means just about everything. Even the ordinary little tussles between a boy and his sister can't be described on their own terms, but must instead be magnified beyond recognition into something cosmic and Wagnerian. "This is my first, uncertain knowledge of evil," Brodkey writes in "The Pain Continuum" of such an encounter, at age four or so. "I am about to give birth—to death . . . . Pain is less than blood . . . . Blood is the boundary of a special

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seriousness." And so on. Such lofty rhetoric serves only to distance the reader from the modest incident it purports to describe, to crush the event itself under the weight of its own grandiloquence. This sort of thing happens time and again in Brodkey's later stories; in the world of these stories epiphanies abound, and, what's more, they're all pretty much alike—in kind, in degree, and in moral dimension. Orgasms, the arrivals of angels, the thrill children feel when they are hoisted in the air by their fathers: when in his later stories Brodkey attempts to describe these phenomena, they all somehow seem to come out to the same thing—a fact which doubtless goes a long way toward accounting for the stories' monotony.

To a few critics, of course, these stories are anything but monotonous. Pick up any recent magazine or newspaper profile of Brodkey and chances are that somewhere in the first couple of paragraphs you'll find quotations from one or more of the following authorities: Harold Bloom, who calls Brodkey "an American Proust"; Denis Donoghue, who pronounces *A Party of Animals* "a work of genius" and says of its author that "there is no one writing in American literature at all comparable"; and Gordon Lish, who declares that "Harold Brodkey has been creating the one necessary American narrative work of this century." According to Dinitia Smith (from whose piece in *New York* magazine most of these quotations have been taken), Brodkey himself reportedly talks obsessively about literary politics, and the curious thing is that such quotations sound less like honest critical judgments than like the remarks of a political campaign's spin doctors. One can readily figure out, in any case, why it would be in the interest of these three particular men—aside from reasons of personal friendship—to prop up the reputation of a Harold Brodkey. Bloom? Brodkey fulfills Bloom's need for a contemporary Jewish-American visionary, a West Side version of Milton and Blake. Lish? The *modus operandi* of Brodkey's later stories validates Lish's own crude, ripped-from-the-gut style of shock-confessional narrative. Donoghue? Brodkey exemplifies, in extreme form, Donoghue's notion of American literature as something whose "moral and rhetorical aim" is "to separate essence from existence, and to protect essence—or call it selfhood—from the vulgarity imposed by mere conditions."

What is remarkable, though, is not that a handful of influential critics have trumpeted Harold Brodkey's name so loudly, but that literary folk have listened so respectfully. Brodkey's stories of the Seventies and Eighties have developed a truly towering reputation; and yet the most cursory inspection is enough to establish that they contain some of the very worst prose of our time. Brodkey writes not only like a man who is certain that his every fleeting thought and trivial act is fascinating and pregnant with meaning; he writes also like a man who is convinced that his every word, comma, and ampersand is divinely inspired. He mistakes bombast for profundity, lexical flatulence for the divine afflatus. Some of his sentences are so wordy and abstract (not to mention pretentious) that they read like examples of bad writing in a freshman composition textbook: "It is not metaphorical or a figure of speech or a conceit," he writes in "The Pain Continuum," "to say that as that knowledge grew to occupy the center and the periphery of my attention, whatever else I knew seemed unimportant, and was, in a geographical sense, forgotten: that is, there was no room for it in my attention." Some sentences are infected with a chatty shapelessness: "Also," Wiley says of Lila in "Largely an Oral History of My Mother," "there are certain serious gloomy honesties in her, a pessimism, and dark insights into people that served as a form of somewhat lazy omniscience ('No one's *really* nice,' she would say), and a dark forgiveness and wonder that a child oughtn't to know about, so she would say to me at times, 'Don't pay attention to me. Go away now—live your own life.'" (Lazy omniscience indeed!)

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Some sentences have to be read at least twice to be understood: in "His Son, in His Arms," for instance, Brodkey writes of his father that "My gaze, my enjoying him, my willingness to be him, my joy at it, supported the baroque tower of his necessary but limited and maybe dishonest optimism." And quite often, as in this passage from "S. L.," he just yammers away:

> It was a peculiarity of that moment and of my life that he was not my father by blood and that I was not an infant when I met him except that I was like an infant. I was an infant a second time, an older, smarter, tougher infant, and weaker and more scarred. And he was *like* a father. I'm trying to say that I was a peculiar example of a son, not an ideal example, but some of that thing of being ideal hovered around me, probably unwisely, as a kind of explanation of the pain of emotion and the poignancy of hope, and a reason for grief and for pleasure—the hurt urgency in the real thing, plus the charitable part, gave a glow of the ideal. But I was not *the son* or *his son* but only *a son he had*. And he was not whatever an Ideal Father actually is or would be—a kind of light inside a common thing—he was not it, or maybe he was, or maybe he was at moments, how would I *know*?

There is always the possibility, of course, that Brodkey will redeem himself—that he will publish *A Party of Animals* and that it will be everything his champions say it is. But if the stories of boyhood which he has collected in the present book are any indication, readers who have been led to expect a work of genius are in for a major disappointment. One particularly odd phenomenon is that even those commentators who admit their dissatisfaction with Brodkey's work have a way of turning their criticism to his advantage. When James Wolcott writes that the lesson of Brodkey's career is that "genius can be both too much and not enough," he is taking a familiar line. But the truth is in fact quite different: the lesson of Brodkey's career is that one should not be surprised when an egocentric writer who is preoccupied with his own supposed genius—and who is mesmerized by the image of himself as a suffering prodigy—produces hundreds of pages of jagged, vainglorious, even infantile prose. The Brodkey of the Eighties may be bearable in small doses but is insufferable at lengths of thirty and forty pages; one can only imagine what he might be like at novel length. Then again, *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode* may be all we will ever see of *A Party of Animals*.

Outside looking in

Juan Goytisolo Forbidden Territory: The Memoirs of Juan Goytisolo, 1931-1956. Translated by Peter Bush. North Point Press, 236 pages, $18.95

reviewed by Lauren Weiner

Although he is not well known in the United States outside of college Spanish departments, Juan Goytisolo ranks as one of the most important Spanish writers since the Second World War. His novels, stories, and essays are automatically issued in English-language editions by the major publishers, with translations by such heavyweights in the field as Helen R. Lane. The latest Goytisolo work to come out in America (translated not by Lane, but by the much less reliable Peter Bush) is *Forbidden Territory*, the first volume of Goytisolo's memoirs, written in 1985.

Juan Goytisolo is a member of the last generation of Spaniards for whom the 1936-39 Civil War was the definitive life experience. The son of a small-scale Barcelona industrialist, he was born in 1931, the year that Catalonia, with Barcelona as its seat, proclaimed the Republic. By 1936, with the victory of the Popular Front, "bloody, gun-ridden Barcelona," as he calls it, had fallen prey to "the ideals and excesses of revolutionary struggle." The top floors of the mansion in which Goytisolo and his three siblings had grown up were requisitioned by soldiers of the International

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Brigades. A band of Republicans sacked the family chapel. Goytisolo's father, a Catholic and a monarchist, as well as an owner of the means of production, was arrested, but was later released when trade-union leaders from the Goytisolo factory intervened. By 1938 the family had moved temporarily to the nearby town of Viladrau. There his mother was killed in a bombing raid executed by the side his father wholeheartedly supported: Franco's.

These events are narrated in *Forbidden Territory* in a haphazard way, as through a haze of memory. The reader with only a general command of the historical outline into which Goytisolo places his family will be lost in some respects, but he will not fail to grasp the central fact of Goytisolo's formation as a man and as an artist: he embraced revolutionary and anti-Francoist causes, literary avant-gardism, and the carousing life of the café bohemian to drive out the habits and principles inculcated in him by his family, class, and race. His project of negative self-definition was a passionate "No" to men of his father's ilk: to their Catholic dogma, their conventional bourgeois strivings, and their heterosexuality.

Alas, the temptations of Freudian interpretation abound in the case of Juan Goytisolo. Grappling with the question of why he and his two brothers, José Agustín Goytisolo and Luis Goytisolo, all ended up being literary men—José Agustín is a poet, Luis a novelist—the author speculates on "the existence of an anguished need to recover from early traumas and disappointment." He recalls the rage and shame that took hold of him when his old, forlorn father wrote to Franco to plead for mercy for his brother Luis, imprisoned for Communist activities. For Goytisolo, the dictator became, as a result of his father's supplicating letter, "that other tyrannical, castrating Father whose ubiquitous, all-embracing presence extended over us and eclipsed his own." The author continues, "from then on, my hatred for the recipient of the humiliating letter would be transformed into a real mania" and he felt "compulsive desires to stamp on, almost crush" that missive and any other with El Caudillo's face on the postage stamp.

Psychoanalytic criticism beckons, too, in Goytisolo's casual honesty about what shaped, or may have shaped, his rebellious nature. His mother's side of the family, of Catalonian stock, is credited with exposing him to the value of literary creation and to the Catalonian tradition of defying the authoritarian power emanating from Madrid. One early idol was his ancestor Ramón Vives Pastor, a freethinking poet who left a Catalan translation of the *Rubaiyat*. Yet it was his mother's father, grandfather Ricardo, who he calmly reveals to have sexually abused him on several occasions.

As for the paternal side of his family, its villainy was total. Originally from the Basque country, the patriarch of the Goytisolo clan sailed to Cuba to make the family fortune off the sweat of African slaves on a sugar plantation. (The colonial "sucrocracy" of nineteenth-century Cuba gets a stinging comeuppance in the opening scenes of Goytisolo's 1975 novel *Juan the Landless*: in an opéra bouffe send-up of plantation life, slaves are being force-fed Christianity in the yard while inside the manor house there is great ceremony over the installation of a flush toilet.)

The scruffy, neglected, thieving boy described in *Forbidden Territory* could not enjoy anything unless he made it into a nefarious activity. He pretended to be going to Mass but instead wandered into his late mother's library. The intense pleasure he found in reading there derived from "the enforced furtive nature of my explorations—the enjoyable awareness of entering forbidden areas." Goytisolo's pleasure in books as being "associated in my inner self with notions of transgression and clandestine activity" was only increased later on by Franco's censors. He characterizes the Francoist authorities as relatively tolerant in many cases, out of carelessness, but one still had to venture out and discover on which

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"discreet shelves" in which bookshops were available a trickle of precious words written by the likes of Ortega y Gasset, Lorca, Orwell, and Bernanos. "The best readers of a work, yesterday in Spain, today in the USSR and Soviet bloc countries, have been, will be, the surreptitious ones," he concludes.

Goytisolo chose the path of greatest delinquency, according to this logic—the life of the man of letters. As he self-mockingly describes it, rather than studying, he majored in literary posturing in the coteries he helped to form in Barcelona, and later at the university in Madrid.

During the 1950s Goytisolo left Spain for France, there to continue his search for the "dandy-cum-bohemian alloy that would unveil my inner greatness to the world." He returned to Spain briefly for military service, and again his comments portray a Francoism that is repressive but not always efficient in its repression—as some have said, not a *dictadura* but a *dictablanda*. "Typically Spanish disorder, arbitrariness and incongruities palliate what in other latitudes could have been inflexible Prussian regimentation" is his verdict on life in a Francoist barracks.

Goytisolo's rejection of Spanish society—inextricably bound up with its rejection of him, a homosexual, an anticlerical, and a reader of banned books—made him susceptible to the anti-establishment "isms" of postwar Europe. But if we are to take the author at his word, he had a pleasingly unruly tendency to slip out of the yokes of these "isms" almost as easily as he slipped into them. His "sentimental adherence to Marxism" was "largely dictated by my desire to atone for the original sin of my class and my family's odious past." Of course. But a "loyal, disciplined fellow traveller," if he is Juan Goytisolo, can only take so much discipline. Here was the kind of insolent young man who, when handed his marching orders by a sinister CP flunky, capriciously flung them into the garbage once out of the horrible fellow's sight. The clandestine Spanish CP put out self-serving propaganda that branded as agents of the Pentagon not only Francoist authors but Goytisolo's heroes—Gide, Camus, Malraux, "Sartre himself." Thus did Communism reveal itself to him as an orthodoxy just as stifling as Catholicism. (His nearly immediate disenchantment with the Cuban revolution, mentioned in *Forbidden Territory*, is recounted in greater detail in the second volume of the memoirs, *En los reinos de taifas* ["Gang Lands"].[1])

Goytisolo's adoption of existentialism seems, by comparison, to have been much more lasting. Serving as an unofficial liaison between the clandestine anti-Francoist resistance in Spain and the leftist intelligentsia abroad, he found a foothold in Parisian existentialist circles and befriended many of the writers he had previously idolized from afar, particularly Jean Genet. His literary tastes appear to be overwhelmingly French. Few compliments are given out to writers in Castilian (Spanish). Indeed, though his novels are written in Castilian, Goytisolo appears to have considered himself a French writer at a certain point in his life. This identification with France, just to the north of the despised homeland, is part of a matched set: he also identifies himself in the book with the Muslims of North Africa, the land just to the south. It is almost as if, by squeezing these two identifications together, Goytisolo might wipe the Iberian peninsula off the map.

He insists that Castilian does not come naturally to him. And, well aware that the reawakening of regional pride since Franco's death demands an answer to the question, "Why do you not write in Catalan?" he takes pains to describe a kind of linguistic vacuum created by the peculiar circumstances of his background. Both Catalan and Castilian were spoken in the Goytisolo home in his early years, but he mastered neither completely. He excoriates

1 *En los reinos de taifas* was published in Spain by Seix Barral in 1986; it is not yet available in translation.

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his younger self for an "impoverished, diluted Castilian" and a "meagre knowledge" of the Catalan language of his mother's family.

This linguistic confusion (made more confusing by Peter Bush's egregious mistranslation of the word "Catalan" to read "Spanish" in places) turns out to be not a handicap but the perfect precondition for moral and artistic authenticity. "Castilian in Catalonia, Frenchified in Spain, Spanish in France, a Latin in North America, *nesrani* [European-Christian] in Morocco and a Moor everywhere, as a result of my wanderings I would soon become that rare species of writer not claimed by anybody, alien and opposed to groupings and categories." As an expatriate Goytisolo desired to slough off the literary dandyism he brought with him to France. Deciding to emulate Genet's "simplicity, modesty, and reserve," he resolved: "I shall be that withdrawn, furtive Arab in Paris, dedicated to the tenacious exercise of his unspeakable manias."

Though the name of T. E. Lawrence goes entirely unmentioned in *Forbidden Territory*, it will dawn on the first-time Goytisolo reader that this agent of British imperialism should be added to the list of spiritual/sexual mentors right next to, perhaps even ahead of, Jean Genet's. Indeed the desire to be an Arab, to consort with "uncivilized" men of the desert as a means of self-obliteration, is linked explicitly to the figure of Lawrence in Goytisolo's novel *Juan the Landless* (in a chapter entitled "The Eighth Pillar of Wisdom"). The protagonist/narrator of that novel, who shares Goytisolo's first name and much else, escapes Spain to be "amid those of your kind at last, immersed in their teeming human broth." In *Forbidden Territory* there is one potentially illuminating comment along these lines, getting at the relationship of homoeroticism to class/ethnic differences. At one point Goytisolo talks about "that fascinating closeness to what is alien and unknown usually corresponding to the complementary dissimilarity between the two sexes."

The restlessness, the captious discontent of the author of *Forbidden Territory*—and it is a T. E. Lawrence kind of discontent, directed as much toward himself as toward others—makes for an often uncomfortable reading experience. Yet the memoir is a model of detachment when compared to Goytisolo's fictions, many of which are cryptic, disjointed, and autobiographically based attacks on decaying Spanish culture.

To take one example, *Juan the Landless* begins with Cuban plantation overlords and underlings but, as a moral corrective, shifts to "the best people ever to have lived in humanity's midst"—the rough but virtuous inhabitants of North Africa and the Middle East. Since the Muslims were expelled from Spain, they are natural candidates for the author's special regard. Indeed, the Jews are not excluded from his compensatory embrace; they too were driven out by *los Reyes Católicos*.

In a scene toward the end of the novel, the protagonist/narrator catches sight of a well-to-do Spanish bourgeois couple in a Moroccan open-air market as they are confronted by an Arab beggar covered with running sores and clothed in filthy rags. The Spanish man and woman draw back from the Arab beggar in disgust. The protagonist says to himself, "How I wish . . . that I could inspire such horror, unite in my person the abjectness, the vileness, the hideous corruption capable of exciting the virtuous scorn of this stinking couple."

Forbidden Territory has no tantrums in it equal to that one. Goytisolo appears to have let his rage against the bourgeoisie cool a few degrees. His anger against himself, however, may only have increased proportionally. As a "Moor everywhere"—but perhaps especially in his own heart—he has produced a memoir too tangled in its recriminations to be among the best of that genre.

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Notebook

The canonization of Susan Warner

by D. G. Myers

Among the many challenges to humanistic study in this country over the past several years, perhaps none has won easier acceptance than the notion that the traditional "canon" of English literature was established, in part, for the purpose of suppressing important works by women. In the face of such a contention, the usual rites of scholarly dispute—example and counter-example, criticism and self-correction—were set aside as those who leveled the charges took sole possession of the field. Lost in the general retreat, however, was an unasked question. What are these important, undiscovered works? Who are their authors?

To date the strongest candidate for enshrinement in the new counter-canon is the nineteenth-century American novelist Susan Warner. An exact contemporary of Whitman, Melville, and James Russell Lowell and a prolific author of sentimental and religious stories, Warner is the author of an 1850 novel, *The Wide, Wide World*. Although that book was published the same year as *The Scarlet Letter*, it was much more widely known than Hawthorne's in the nineteenth century. Indeed, its popularity was eclipsed only by that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

In our own time, *The Wide, Wide World* was almost completely forgotten until it was rescued from oblivion by a single enterprising critic—Jane Tompkins. Since Tompkins first brought it to the attention of the English Institute in 1983, the novel has been fully rehabilitated and has begun to attract wider notice. Reissued in paperback by the Feminist Press[1] and praised as "energetic and vivid" by James Atlas in *The New York Times Magazine*, it has even begun to appear on examination lists for the Ph.D. in American literature—the last of the three miracles prior to canonization.

In all of this, it might be fairly asked if the renewal of interest in *The Wide, Wide World* owes as much to the intrinsic merit of the book as it does to the fact of its being championed by Tompkins. Jane Tompkins, after all, is a very important person in the academic criticism of literature. She is a professor of English at Duke—the new headquarters of critical theory—and is the wife of Stanley Fish, chairman of the department there. Originally the *doyenne* of the reader-response method, Tompkins has recently moved on to become one of the leading lights of the New Historicism, the school that seeks to "re-historicize" literary texts—that is, to reconstruct their ideological backgrounds. Her study *Sensational Designs*,[2] of which an entire chapter is devoted to Warner's novel, gives every promise of becoming the standard treat-

1 *The Wide, Wide World*, by Susan Warner; The Feminist Press, 608 pages, $11.95.

2 *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*, by Jane Tompkins, was published in 1985 by Oxford University Press; 236 pages, $22.50.

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ment of the new canonical works of nineteenth-century American fiction.

But the question is this: Given Tompkins's authority and renown as a critic, coupled with the fact that she is the first to have dealt with *The Wide, Wide World* at any length, which is the work that is more likely to become "canonical"—Warner's novel or Tompkins's interpretation of it? The two are far from being the same thing.

As Warner conceived it, *The Wide, Wide World* is the story of a young girl's spiritual education between the ages of about eight and thirteen. When the novel opens, Ellen Montgomery is living in New York with her mother and father. She is content with her lot, despite the fact that her mother is bedridden with illness. But Ellen's contentment is fated not to last. Her father has only recently lost a major lawsuit, and Ellen learns that he must leave America "to go soon on some government or military business to Europe." When he goes, he takes Ellen's mother with him—for her health. Ellen is abandoned to the care of her father's childless sister, Fortune Emerson, who lives a few miles outside the distant farming village of Thirlwall. Ellen never sees her parents again.

The remainder of the nearly six-hundred-page novel is taken up with Ellen's attempts to make her way in the wide, wide world, where "a little one alone . . . is in danger of being trampled upon." Ellen faces this danger time after time—Aunt Fortune resents her, odd people try to kiss her, some children plague her, old tormentors return to torment her again—but in the end she learns to meet these "trial[s] of temper and patience" with an attitude of Christian resignation. Harder trials follow. Her mother dies ("it seemed as if Ellen's very heart was flowing away in her tears"); then her dearest friend. But Ellen is never entirely alone: a kindly stranger or an unoccupied friend is always close at hand with a bit of moral instruction, an uplifting hymn, or an apposite quotation from Scripture.

After her father's death, Ellen is packed off to Scotland. There she faces her hardest trial yet. Her Scottish relatives, afraid that Ellen is "hurting [herself] by poring over serious matters [she] is too young for," hoping to brighten the unnatural gravity of so young a child, forbid her to rise an hour before the rest of the household to say her morning prayers. It is the moment of Ellen's spiritual crisis. She retreats to her room to sing "Rock of Ages" and "a little Methodist hymn she had learned when a mere child." Her uncle, listening outside the door, is touched. He permits her an hour after breakfast for prayer; and with that, although "Ellen's principles were still now and then severely tried," her spiritual development is largely complete.

So far, Warner's novel as she wrote it. Astonishingly, out of this story of spiritual uplift Jane Tompkins spins a political tale. Although *The Wide, Wide World* is usually classified as a religious novel, Tompkins prefers to see it as representative of a genre which is "preoccupied, even obsessed, with the nature of power." Barred from self-fulfillment by men's priorities in "a Puritanical and trading nation," women in the nineteenth century, Tompkins says, discovered in sentimental and domestic novels like *The Wide, Wide World* "a counter-strategy against their worldly masters that would finally give them the upper hand." Along the way they also discovered sisterhood and solidarity.

> The fact is that American women simply could not assume a stance of open rebellion against the conditions of their lives for they lacked the material means of escape or opposition. They had to stay put and submit. And so the domestic novelists made that necessity the basis on which to build a power structure of their own. Instead of rejecting the culture's value system outright, they appropriated it for their own use, subjecting the beliefs and customs that had molded them to a series of transformations that allowed them both to fulfill and transcend their appointed roles.

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Thus in Protestant religion, for example, Ellen Montgomery finds the means of "bypassing" the worldly authority of men by "merg[ing] her own authority with God's." An actual nineteenth-century woman, forced to live in the social reality outside of novels, may have believed that through the practice of her religion she was seeking Christian salvation by means of self-mastery and submission to God's will. But this was a delusion. When "translated into social terms," Tompkins says, all salvation really means is "learning to submit to the authorities society has placed over you"—father, husband, pastor. Only in novels like *The Wide, Wide World* could women find an imaginative "design" for evasion of this tyranny; the sentimental-religious novel taught women to "internalize" God's authority and by so doing to transform "the condition of their lives."

Likewise, women in the nineteenth century were confined to the home. Forbidden to own property, to vote, or to speak at a public meeting if men were present, a woman's only "territory" and "material advantage," according to Tompkins, was the house she kept for her husband and family. Such an existence offered women few satisfactions; "in order to survive, they had to imagine their prison as the site of bliss." This was the function—or, as Tompkins calls it, the "cultural work"—performed by novels like *The Wide, Wide World.* They invested "domestic routines" with "sacramental power"; by exalting domesticity, they allowed women (imaginatively at least) to make "a successful bid for status and sway." Bound in union by their household chores, the female characters in sentimental novels find "compensat[ion] for their servitude by celebrating daily their exclusive, mutually supportive love for one another." The thousands of women who devoured these novels, Tompkins implies, must have found no less.

Of course, Tompkins realizes that "such claims are pathetic and ridiculous—the fantasies of a disenfranchised group, the line that society feeds to members whom it wants to buy off with the illusion of strength while denying them any real power." But it isn't that simple. The crucial point, Tompkins says, is that sentimental-religious novels like *The Wide, Wide World* actually did give women in the nineteenth century a sort of "real power." By helping to shape "the discourse of the age," the popular view of such matters, these novels influenced the way in which nineteenth-century Americans conceived of women, religion, the home. They bestowed upon women a sort of power by *representing* women as "all-powerful in relation to the world." Even though submission to God "looks like slavery to us" and homemaking "looks to us like deprivation," the nineteenth century looked at things quite differently—religion offered "mastery" and the home a "means of personal fulfillment." Of course they were not these. But how did nineteenth-century Americans come to think they were? Tompkins replies: by reading novels like *The Wide, Wide World.* These novels were, in other words, "attempts to redefine the social order." And this is the basis of Tompkins's claim for the importance of novels like Susan Warner's.

Two things must be said about Tompkins's treatment of *The Wide, Wide World.* First, in its political tendentiousness, it is absurdly wrongheaded. Second, and perhaps more important, Tompkins's claims are undermined by the novel's failings. The book is simply too bad for its exclusion from the canon to have been, as Tompkins insists, a "mistake." Susan Warner's intentions are more dignified and admirable than anything Jane Tompkins dreams of, but her novel simply does not realize them.

To begin with, *The Wide, Wide World* is not a novel about power. It is a religious novel; it is concerned with the problem of living in the world without compromising one's faith, and it treats this problem entirely in religious terms. The only way that Tompkins can misread *The Wide, Wide World* as a political novel is by failing to take

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Warner's religion as seriously as Warner herself took it. Tompkins is apparently unable to conceive of religion as anything more than a sham—a protective, self-deluding response to a condition of powerlessness. She is capable of writing that a woman who submits to God's will is merely "merg[ing] her own authority" with His, or that salvation "means learning to submit to the authorities society has placed over you," perhaps because she has never felt a sincere religious impulse herself, or because she has never leavened her hostility toward religious belief with an effort to understand believers on their terms. In any case, she refuses even to entertain the possibility that Warner's religious feeling might have been genuine. Although Tompkins faults male critics for deriding the "triviality" of *The Wide, Wide World*, it is she who trivializes Warner.

That said, however, the point remains to be made that *The Wide, Wide World* fails utterly as a religious novel. Warner's intention is to give an exhaustive account of one child's moral development, to produce a kind of guidebook for spiritual growth. The problem is that Ellen is not very immoral to begin with. From the first, she is befriended by people who recognize her native spirituality; they shield her from those who don't. Ellen is good *in potentia* from first to last; and when she is good *in actu*—when she performs a small kindness—she acts in such a way that others will plainly see. Ellen's actions do not establish her innate goodness; that much is given; their one purpose is to identify who is good and who is not among the other characters in the novel. There are the Teachers, who explicitly dogmatize the moral lessons Ellen is to learn. And there are the Tormentors, who vex Ellen in one way or another and provide her with an occasion to learn her lessons. ("You mustn't get vexed so easily, my child," she is told. "Don't let every little untoward thing roughen your temper." This is the level on which her moral instruction takes place.) The real interest in the novel lies not in witnessing Ellen's trials of faith—we know ahead of time that she will pass all her tests—but in watching to see which characters will recognize her goodness and which will not, and whether her Tormentors will get their comeuppance.

Warner seems to have perceived that Ellen's self-evident goodness created both dramatic and religious problems for her book. But she was unable to solve them. "'I am not good at all,'" she has Ellen protest when someone calls her so: "'we're none of us good,' and the tears rose to her eyes,—'but the Bible will teach us how to be . . . .'" Yet the protest is feeble. "[I]f you ain't good," one character objects, "I should like to know what goodness is." And as if in acknowledgment of this character's point, Warner hastens to exhibit Ellen at her worst: she is annoyed when a naughty book is taken out of her hands! And again when she is asked to set aside her drawing in order to hold a skein of cotton for her dearest friend!

The fact is that Warner cannot *imagine* what it would mean for such a little girl as Ellen Montgomery to be totally depraved; though she accepts the doctrine of original sin on faith, Warner is incapable of giving it imaginative life. For a novel which was conceived as a Christian *Bildungsroman*, then, *The Wide, Wide World* has little religious resonance—or dramatic appeal. The spiritual theme is wholly contained in the sermons that various characters deliver to Ellen: the novel has no more of a religious dimension than that.

For Tompkins, however, the graver charge against *The Wide, Wide World* is that it is unrealistic, "divorced from actual human experience" and, more specifically, unaware of "the brute facts of political and economic oppression." Someone without Tompkins's ideological preconceptions might put the matter a bit differently. The novel's greatest flaw, the quality that keeps it from being a genuine work of literature, is its shameless sentimentality.

What is apt to strike any modern reader of *The Wide, Wide World* is the sheer amount of tears shed by little Ellen over the course

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of the novel. A letter-writer to the turn-of-the-century literary journal *The Critic* once skewered the book by listing the manifold phrases that Warner had come up with to describe Ellen's weeping:

> Her tears almost choked her, began to drop again, brought no relief, came faster than her words, dropped into the water, fell faster, fell from the eyes, fell much too fast for her eyes to do their work, flowed, flowed faster than ever, followed in a flood, gushed forth, had to be wiped away, kept coming all the time, knew no measure, mingled, poured, ran down her cheeks, ran down her face and frock, ran fast again, ran fast down her face and fell into her lap, rose to her eyes, rushed to her eyes, started, streamed from her eyes, used to flow abundantly when they could unseen . . . .

Tompkins tries to defend all this by saying it is "rage" that Ellen betrays in "the deluge of [her] tears." But this is ridiculous. Ellen cries for many reasons. She cries when she is vexed and she cries when she is moved by piety—her tears "blind" her when she realizes that she loves Christ, and she falls to her knees "in a perfect agony of weeping." If truth be told, Ellen cries at the drop of a hat, and far too often for her fits of weeping to be lumped together as "rage" at a condition of powerlessness. It would be more accurate to say that the real purpose, the literary purpose, of Ellen's tears is to evoke pity in the reader. They are *cues* to the reader that compassion and tenderness are called for. This is how they act even on the other characters in the novel:

> "Mr. Van Brunt, are you one of that fold?"
>
> "What fold?"
>
> "The fold of Christ's people."
>
> "I'm afeard not, Miss Ellen," he said soberly, after a minute's pause.
>
> "Because," said Ellen, bursting into tears, "I wish you were, very much."
>
> She carried [Van Brunt's] great brown hand to her lips before she let it go. He went without saying a word. But when he got out he stopped and looked at a little tear she had left on the back of it. And he looked till one of his own fell there to keep it company.

Tompkins defends this gagging sentimentality by insisting that the picture of life held up by such passages was conditioned by the conventions of the age—they seemed perfectly real to people at the time. "[T]he 'order of things' to which both readers and fictions belonged was itself structured by such narratives [as *The Wide, Wide World*]," she says. What she means is that the sentimental *Weltanschauung* governed how everyone within the culture conceived of genuine emotion. This seems a doubtful claim; it reduces all of human emotion to the sentimental novel's narrow, narrow world. Only an extremely ungenerous view of literature and life could allow one so severely to disparage both the emotional range of novels and the emotional capacities of those who read them.

Tompkins means to justify Warner's sentimentality, then, by assimilating it to that of her audience. But this in itself is a criticism of Warner. For another way to make much the same point is to say that Susan Warner was not in command of her material. She could be said to have been as much the victim of the cult of sentimentality as any reader addicted to the books of E. D. E. N. Southworth, Maria Cummins, Mary J. Holmes, Marion Harland, Ann Stephens, Marion McIntosh, and the myriad other sentimental novelists of the day.

But this just won't do. If all the sentimental novelists of the nineteenth century can be shown to have groaned under the yoke of the sentimental convention, why read one of them rather than another? Tompkins says that *The Wide, Wide World* represents the "entire body of work" in "its purest form." But why read any of them at all? One purpose of great literature has always been to train the affective life of man by making subtle distinctions between emotions. Sentimental literature, by contrast, blurs subtleties of feeling, confuses similar emotions, refuses to discriminate, finds in every mood a cause for tears.

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Tompkins recognizes that *The Wide, Wide World* concentrates "exclusively on the emotions." But the novel would have to do a better job than it does at disciplining and ordering the emotions to qualify as genuine literature. All too typically, Warner is tongue-tied, baffled, in the face of strong emotion. In what is meant to be the most moving scene of the novel, Ellen bids farewell to her mother:

> [Ellen's mother] said not a word, but opened her arms to receive her little daughter; and with a cry of indescribable expression Ellen sprang upon the bed, and was folded in them. But then neither of them spoke or wept. What could words say? Heart met heart in that agony, for each knew all that was in the other.

Indescribable expression, each knew all that was in the other. These are not the phrases of a genuine artist, a writer who wishes to describe expression, to *make known* all that was in her characters. This is the prose of a writer who expects her readers to sense vaguely what she means and to supply the necessary feeling.

Susan Warner is of some minor importance as a historical figure, but she is almost devoid of literary value. Nevertheless, she has become important for another reason altogether: she is symbolic of attempts to redefine the meaning of literature in our time. What is too little perceived is that efforts such as Jane Tompkins's on behalf of Susan Warner involve a calculated assault on the very principle of literary and intellectual distinction. Looking back on *The Wide, Wide World*, Henry James said that, though edifying and even charming, such works can "legitimate themselves" as genuine novels only if they are the products of a first-rate mind—a mind, that is, which "is the master and not the slave of its material." Like so many critics in the university these days, Tompkins insists on seeing all writers as second-rate minds—as slaves to their age's ideology. She does not really care if new canonical texts such as *The Wide, Wide World* are bad books. In fact, the worse the better, she might say: the weaker the book, the more useful it may prove. For the weak is what can be taken advantage of. Small wonder, then, that Tompkins and critics of her kind would reorganize literary study in the university by devoting more and more classroom time to second-rate writers like Susan Warner and by teaching better writers as equally second-rate.

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Letters

Remembering Philip Guston

To the Editors:

Judging by her recent review of Musa Mayer's *Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston by His Daughter* (September 1988), it would seem that Deborah Solomon not so much read a different book from that which I read as she concocted a new one more suitable to her spite than the original. The method employed is a combination of inaccurate and selectively edited citations.

I quote Solomon ostensibly quoting Mayer: "They [the Rothko family] seemed to have everything, I remember thinking . . . . But then, seven years later, Mark Rothko shot himself." In her own words, Solomon continues, "Rothko didn't shoot himself; he slit his wrists. It's hard to know which is more offensive—this misstatement or the way the author slyly saved it for the last line of the chapter, squeezing every possible ounce of melodrama out of Rothko's death." In fact, Mayer's chapter is about the longing she had for a normal home life, in the context of which the mention of Rothko's death is not manipulative "melodrama" but the personal expression of shock and dismay at the loss of a family friend and the loss of an illusion of harmony. Further, Solomon's equal emphasis on the "offensive" implications of misidentifying Rothko's means of suicide strikes one as curious to say the least. How is Rothko's reputation or tragedy in any way tainted by such an error? And whose error was it? Solomon's, it would appear, since the actual text of Mayer's final paragraph reflects Solomon's supposed quotations neither in import nor in exact wording. To correct this mistake on her part I will quote directly the last lines of Mayer's chapter as it appears in print:

> They [the Rothko family] seemed to have everything, I remember thinking at the time. Having a baby late in life seemed so romantic, so ultimately domestic and cozy. So it could happen. Artists could make others happy without making themselves miserable. And vice versa. Such a thing was possible. But then, seven years later, Mark Rothko *killed* himself [italics mine] and I decided I didn't understand any of it after all.

Suffice it to say that the remainder of Solomon's piece is a similar mixture of willful misreadings, unsubstantiated inferences regarding the author's motives, fiction, and ranting. In retrospect, her fascination with the tools of destruction is not hard to fathom. Solomon's vocation is not suicide but character assassination and her weapon of choice, the hatchet.

Robert Storr
Brooklyn, NY

Deborah Solomon replies:

Robert Storr accuses me of wielding a hatchet, yet it is he who is guilty of possession of a weapon. I'm afraid he has aimed an elephant gun at the proverbial molehill.

Storr charges me with willful inaccuracy, yet the only example he is able to cite is my supposed misquoting of Musa Mayer on the subject of Rothko's death. When I quoted Mayer as saying

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"Rothko shot himself" I was quoting from bound galleys, which are customarily sent to reviewers before a book is ready. The statement was later changed to read: "Rothko killed himself." I'm glad Mayer—or one of her editors—caught the error in time to correct it for the finished book.

Stuart Davis

To the Editors:
For a catalogue raisonné of work by Stuart Davis (1892-1964) to be published in the fall of 1990 by Yale University Press, I would like to hear from owners of paintings, watercolors, and drawings with whom I have not been in contact. The catalogue will be published simultaneously with the Stuart Davis retrospective exhibition to be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990.

Please contact:

William C. Agee, Editor
Stuart Davis Catalogue Raisonné
c/o Salander-O-Reilly Galleries, Inc.
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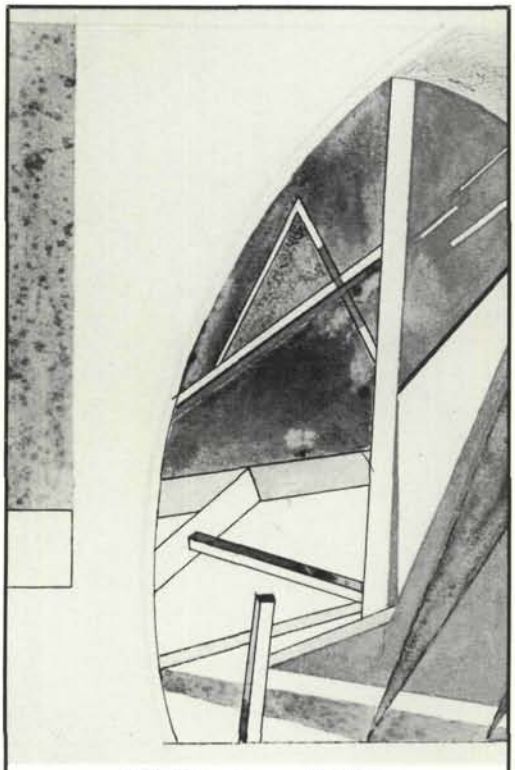

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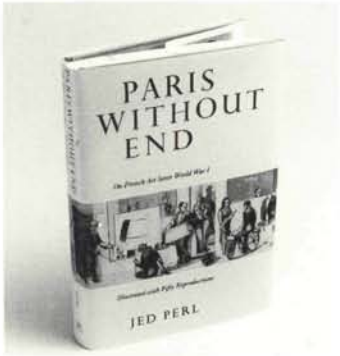

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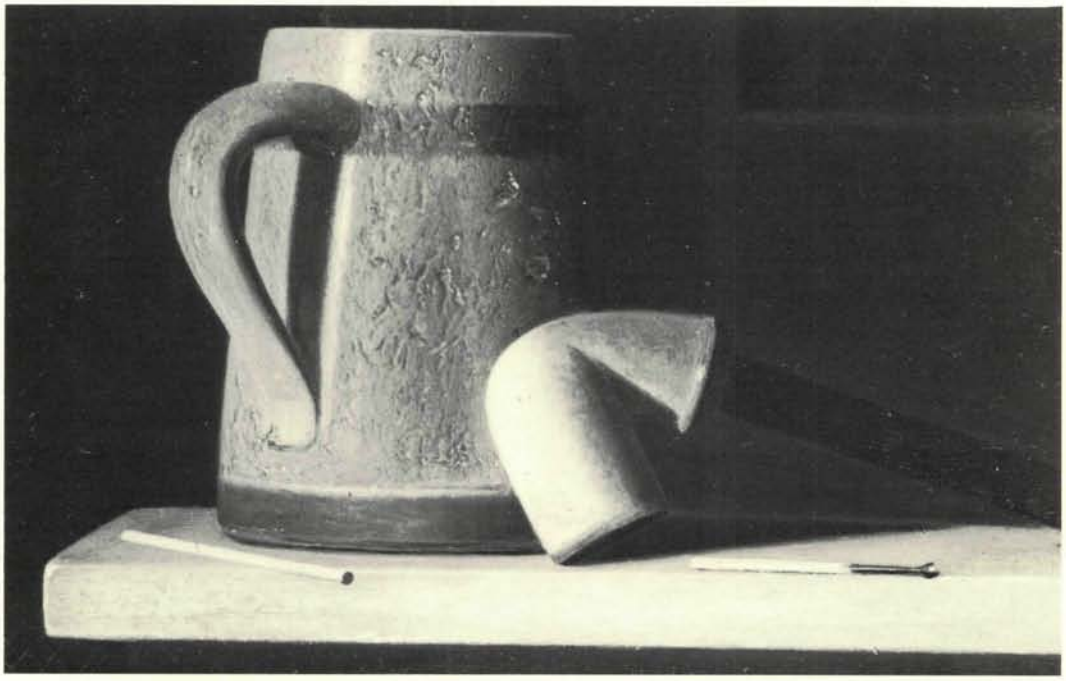

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